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HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

VOL. IV

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1809 — ABRAHAM LINCOLN — 1865.

1860.

From an original ambrotype in possession of Major William H. Lambert, Philadelphia, Pa.

HISTORY
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

BY
HENRY WILLIAM ELSON
AUTHOR OF "SIDE LIGHTS ON AMERICAN HISTORY," ETC.

*With Two Hundred Illustrations Selected and
Edited by Charles Henry Hart*

VOLUME IV

New York
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1908

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HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE GREAT POLITICAL DUEL BETWEEN THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH PRECEDING THE CIVIL WAR

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1852

THE excitement over the compromise measures had scarcely subsided when the quadrennial election of a President claimed the country's attention. Seldom had the political sky been less clear. The advantage seemed to lie with the Democrats, not that their party had been wiser than the opposite party, nor that it had done anything to deserve the support of the country, but because it had been out of power and was less responsible than its rival for the fierce agitation over the Omnibus Bill.

The Democratic convention met in Baltimore on the 1st of June. Four notable aspirants for the honor were prominently spoken of: General Cass, the stalwart and dignified leader; James Buchanan of Pennsylvania, Stephen A. Douglas, "The Little Giant," and ex-Governor Marcy of New York. But each had his element of weakness, and after many ballots it was seen that none of these four could command the necessary two thirds, and the convention cast its eyes about for a dark horse. The mantle fell on the shoulders of Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire. Pierce was the son of a soldier of the Revolution, and he learned his first

lessons of patriotism while sitting at his father's hearthstone listening to the stories of that long and dreary war, told over and over again by his father and the comrades who often gathered at his fireside to talk of the olden days. The son grew to manhood, became a leading member of the bar, and served in both houses of Congress. He declined an invitation to enter the Cabinet of President Polk, but he volunteered his services to the Mexican War, and, though he knew little of military affairs, the favor of the President soon made him a brigadier general. In no sense was Franklin Pierce a great man. He had not won great distinction as a lawyer, nor as a statesman, and still less as a soldier.

But Pierce possessed some of the needful qualities of a successful candidate. He was hale and jovial, and he won friends on every side. Being a secondary man in public life, he had awakened few antagonisms. Moreover, he accepted unreservedly the Democratic platform, the chief plank of which was that indorsing the compromise measures, including the Fugitive Slave Law. A wave of disappointment spread over the party at the nomination of Pierce. Why should the great party leaders, who had spent their lives in the forefront of battle, be set aside for this mediocre man? But this feeling subsided and the party was soon united as one man for its candidate.

The Whig convention met ten days after the adjournment of the Democrats, in the same hall of the same city. The party was hopelessly divided; it was little more than a disorganized mass, and the herculean efforts of the leaders to bring harmony proved fruitless. The chief candidates for the nomination were three: Winfield Scott, Millard Fillmore, and Daniel Webster. But the rock that threatened to wreck the party was the platform, rather than the choice



1804 — FRANKLIN PIERCE — 1865.

BY GEORGE PETER ALEXANDER HEALY, 1852.

**From the original portrait in possession of Kirk D. Pierce, Esq., of Hillsboro
Bridge, N.H.**

of candidates. The southern wing of the party demanded that the convention indorse the compromise measures as a finality. Such an act would be equivalent to a promise to agitate the subject no more, and to aid in the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law. How could the Seward Whigs do this? How could the men who had fought that measure in Congress, or those who had been enraged at the seizure of Anthony Burns, had exulted at the rescue of Joshua Glover — how could they now pronounce that hated law a final settlement of the great question?

Yet the southern Whigs were inflexible in their demand that the convention indorse this measure, as the Democratic convention had done. Many Democrats had also opposed the passage of this law; but most of these had reëntered the party fold; a few had swung away into the ranks of the Free-soilers. The defection in that party was not serious. It was like a tiny satellite cast off from the major planet. But it was different with the Whigs. Under the powerful leadership of Seward nearly half the party was ready to resist the demands of the South. At length, however, the Seward people, after coming to a tacit understanding with some of the southern delegates that the northern wing should name the candidate, yielded the point, and the Fugitive Slave Act was indorsed as a finality by the convention. Yet it was with exceeding difficulty that Scott was nominated. The South objected to Scott because he stood too near to Seward, the originator of the higher-law doctrine, because he refused to express himself on the compromise, and because he had written a letter some years before which seemed to indicate that he desired the ultimate extinction of slavery.¹ The South wanted Fillmore, a

¹ Von Holst, Vol. IV, p. 160.

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northern man, it is true, but he had signed the Fugitive Slave Law and had shown great vigor in enforcing it.²

Then there was Webster, who fondly hoped that the prize would fall to him. But Webster was the idol of no great section. He had a few faithful friends, but he had forfeited the allegiance of the North by his Seventh of March Speech. Whatever may have been his motives in making that speech, whatever may be the judgment of history in regard to it, it is certain that his contemporaries could not shake off the belief that he was bidding for southern support in the presidential race, and that thenceforth he was classed with the northern men of southern principles.³ But the South would not support Webster. He was too new a convert to win their confidence. They remembered him as the author of the mighty speech against Hayne, as the reviver of the doctrine of nationality; and if now he would barter the convictions of a lifetime to win the favor of the South, what might he do, if he became President, to regain the favor of his own section? No, the South could not trust the great New Englander with the sacred interests of slavery, and in all the fifty-three ballots of the convention he received not one vote from that section.⁴

² The Fillmore followers were called "Silver Grays."

³ Horace Mann declared that if President Jackson, to win a third term, had defended the United States Bank and made Nicholas Biddle his bosom friend; if Clay had abandoned his protective principles and become a free trader; if Calhoun had raised the standard of immediate emancipation — none of these changes would have furnished such material of contradiction and amazement as that of Webster. "Mr. Webster espouses doctrines more southern than South Carolina, and becomes Calhouner than Mr. Calhoun."—*Congressional Globe*, 1st Session 32d Cong., App., p. 1079.

⁴ It is said, however, that the southern delegates promised Webster

Scott was nominated on the fifty-third ballot; but this did not bring harmony to the party. His name awakened little enthusiasm in the North and still less in the South. Alexander H. Stephens, Robert Toombs, and other leading southern Whigs put forth a manifesto declaring that they would not support Scott. Such was the condition of the Whig party when it went before the people asking their suffrages in 1852. Twice had the Whigs won by choosing a soldier to head their ticket, and now they had chosen a third, greater than either; but the times had changed. Scott lost ground throughout the campaign, and carried only four states in the election.⁵ The victory of Pierce was more sweeping than any since the second election of Monroe, though the campaign was notable for the extreme apathy of the people. William R. King of Alabama, who had served many years in the Senate, was elected Vice President.

The cause of the great Democratic victory was the fact that the party was unanimous and doubtless sincere in its promise to leave the slavery question undisturbed, a matter on which the Whigs, notwithstanding their forced platform, were yet divided. The people, especially the business men of the country, were utterly weary of the agitation, and they gave their suffrages to the party that promised them rest.⁶

their votes if he could come down to Mason and Dixon's line with forty. But this, as they probably knew, he could not do.

⁵ Vermont, Massachusetts, Kentucky, and Tennessee. See Stanwood's "Presidential Elections," p. 191.

⁶ The Free Soil party had also its ticket in the field, headed by Senator John P. Hale of New Hampshire; but it carried no state, and its popular vote was much lighter than in 1848, when Van Buren headed the ticket.

DEATH OF CLAY AND WEBSTER

While the Whig convention sat in Baltimore, the founder of the party lay on his deathbed in Washington. But once since the opening of Congress had Clay been able to go to the Senate. He was dying, and the summons came ere the close of the month that had witnessed this last national convention of the party in which he had so long been the leading figure. His end was peaceful and calm; he passed away with sincere confidence in the Christian religion. Few men have been so deeply mourned by the whole nation as was Henry Clay. The solemn funeral procession passed through various cities of the North before crossing the Alleghanies; and, as it moved to the mournful music, the evidence of sorrow, shown by the vast crowds that gathered, betokened the love in which the deceased was held.

Henry Clay possessed some great qualities. As a parliamentary leader he has no equal in American history. As a party leader, as an idol of the people, he stood in the highest rank; and indeed, but three men in our history — Jefferson, Jackson, and Blaine — can be classed with him in this respect. Clay was a man of definite party principles and aims, but at a time of imminent peril he would waver and stoop a little below his ordinary level to carry his ends. This is shown by his Alabama letter, and by his hedging on the tariff in the campaign of 1844. As a statesman Clay cannot be placed in the very first rank. He lacked the broad analytic mind of Jefferson, the deep foresight of Hamilton, and the prophetic intuition of Jackson. His judgment was too often at fault. Some of the greatest achievements of his life proved to be political blunders, notably his forcing the bank charter through Congress in 1832.

Clay has been called the great compromiser, though he

was the author of but two compromises in his long career: first, that of 1833 on the tariff, and second, the Compromise of 1850.⁷ But the wisdom of both of these is open to question. The compromise measure of 1850 may have been necessary to avert greater dangers; but its author did not foresee that he was sacrificing his own beloved party upon the altar, and that the evils he sought to avert were only postponed for a very few years. But Nature kindly spared him from seeing those evils, and Henry Clay, after a long public career, strangely mingled with light and shadow, laid aside his staff "like one that is weary," and his ashes were laid to rest in his own beloved Kentucky.

Daniel Webster, a few years younger than Clay, was associated with him in public life for nearly forty years, and their names are frequently linked together in history. They were leaders in the same great party; usually, but not always, they were personal as well as political friends. But the two men were so unlike that it is difficult to find a point of resemblance. As a party leader Clay stood far above Webster; as a giant in intellect Webster overshadowed Clay. Clay won the love of the people; Webster won their admiration and praise. Clay made many warm friends, and had bitter enemies; Webster had fewer friends, and almost no personal enemies. Both were intensely American, and the passionate desire of each was to become president of the United States. With Clay this longing covered most of his political life; with Webster, only a few of his latter years.

⁷ Clay has often been called the author of the Missouri Compromise; but aside from the second compromise concerning the admission of free blacks into Missouri, he had no more to do with it than some of his colleagues.

Both failed, but each made a permanent name in American history far above that of the average President.

As an orator Webster holds the first place in our history; as a constitutional lawyer he stands without a peer, and he was singularly powerful in developing a constitutional principle. But he was not painstaking; he disliked the routine work of Congress, and one of his lifelong drawbacks was indolence. Webster was not without faults, the most notable of which was a want of thrift. His income from his profession was large, but he had no power to keep out of debt, and his life work would have been thereby weakened but for the aid of some of his rich friends, who now and then came to the rescue. The last years of Webster's life were weakened by his inordinate desire to be President; but he always fell far short of receiving the nomination of his party. He was more popular with the masses than with the politicians, but not even among the people was there any great desire for his candidacy. He had never been a party leader, nor had he proved himself a safe party man; and, as above stated, he appealed to the intellect rather than to the heart. The last great effort of his friends to secure his nomination at Baltimore in 1852 proved a disastrous failure.

Webster's grief and disappointment at this crushing defeat furnish the saddest incident in his great life. The account of his interview with his friend, Rufus Choate, the great Boston lawyer, after the convention had adjourned, is inexpressibly sad, and Choate afterward referred to it as the most mournful experience of his life.^a A few months later the great New England statesman sank down into the grave, denouncing the pursuit of politics as vanity of vanities, and advising his friends to vote for the Democratic

^a Harvey, quoted by Rhodes, Vol. I, p. 260.

candidates. Thus the most brilliant star in the political firmament, after waning from the passing of its zenith, was obscured at its setting by a dark cloud.*

But Webster's final days were days of peace. As he lay at his Marshfield home waiting for the final call, he seemed to have forgotten all about the turmoils of political strife, and his mind soared through the realms of the unknown. He spoke of the wondrous works of God; he requested that on his tombstone be inscribed a statement of his profound belief that the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be a divine reality; he discussed the gradual steps of dissolution with his physician, and said that no man who is not a brute can say that he is not afraid of death. "I shall die to-night,"¹⁰ said he to his physician, as the sun rose on the last day of his life. It was on one of those dreamy October days, known as Indian summer, when Nature invites everything that hath breath to love her and to praise the Lord, that the great man cast his eyes for the last time on her changing forms, that he heard for the last time the murmuring waves of the Atlantic through his open window, that he called his family one by one and bade them farewell. At nightfall he sank into a gentle slumber. Waking after midnight, he said, "I still live," his last intelligible words. In the early morning his life went out with the ebbing of the tide.¹¹

The mourning for Webster was widespread and sincere. The attitude of the South at the Whig convention had caused a reaction throughout the North. Boston had given him a grand reception in July, and now Massachusetts was heartbroken at the death of her great son.

* See Von Holst, Vol. IV, p. 204.

¹⁰ Curtis's "Life of Webster," Vol. II, p. 696.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 697-701.

All human talents and virtues have their limitations. Nature is not uniform in distributing her gifts. When she makes a man great in this or in that line, she often leaves him in other respects, like Samson with the shorn locks, as weak as other men. Webster's life was a great life; but he was weak in some points. Strange that such a man should pine for an office that so many smaller men had filled. Strange, too, that he could not see, as we now see, that the presidency, had he attained it, would not probably have added a jot to his illustrious name in American history. But we must remember Webster, not by the weaknesses of his later years, but for his whole life, especially for the principle of nationality of which he was our greatest exponent, a principle epitomized in his own undying words: "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable."

FALL OF THE WHIG PARTY.

We have taken leave of the two great leaders of the Whig party; we must now give a parting word to the party itself. But a few weeks after the death of the great New England statesman at Marshfield the party to which he belonged received a blow at the polls from which it could not recover. This was the last national campaign of the Whig party. The structure was tottering to its fall, and ere the return of the next quadrennial election the story of its existence was history. Of the many political organizations in our history the Whig party was one of only four that became so powerful as to secure control of the government; and it differs from the other three in that it has left us no legislation of permanent value, by which to enrich our national life and to distinguish its name in history.¹² During the

¹² See Schouler, Vol. IV, p. 261.

twenty years of its existence it had but one rival, the Democratic party, and by that party it was beaten in all its great measures. It will be remembered that the compromise measures of 1850 were sectional and not partisan in their nature, and while most of the country seemed disposed to accept them as a finality, they awakened the lasting opposition of many, and the odium had to be borne by the Whig party. Many Democrats had supported the measures, but they were fathered by the great Whig leader and signed by a Whig President, and the resentment they awakened north and south was visited upon that party. On this rock the party became hopelessly divided, and these measures are usually regarded as the cause of its downfall. But there were other causes.

The old Federal party had been overthrown because it was too aristocratic and centralizing in its tendencies, because it differed too widely from its Democratic rival. The Whig party's downfall was due in part to the opposite reason — it had become too Democratic. It had yielded to the Democrats on all the great issues between them: the bank, the independent treasury, the tariff, and at length the issues of the Mexican War. Not one of these did the Whigs attempt to disturb when they regained power in 1848; and the only other great question before the country, slavery, was sectional and not partisan. After 1850, therefore, the two great parties stood on common ground. No longer were there principles to fight for—only spoils. And since, as before stated, in the world of politics two of a kind cannot exist together, one of these two parties must disappear.

But the Democratic party was no better than the Whig. Why then did it survive while its rival perished? Because, first, its traditions and history, almost coexistent with the

government, appealed to the sentiment of its adherents; second, it had held a steady course while the Whigs had yielded every important issue between them; and third, it escaped the odium of the compromise. Thus, from various causes, the Whig party passed into history, and by so doing it made way for another that was soon to be born, one destined to do a mighty work for the nation which the old party could not have done.

Millard Fillmore, the last of the Whig Presidents, was a man of sincere and honest motives. The odium of signing the Fugitive Slave Law he could not outlive; but, as before stated, there is little doubt that he meant it for the best, and it is difficult to see how he could have done otherwise without bringing disaster on the country. He was the victim of conditions that he could not control.

THE KANSAS-NEBRASKA BILL

Franklin Pierce was the youngest man ever made President up to that time.¹³ His inaugural address was generally well received; but the statement that new territory should be acquired (and this meant Cuba) confirmed the belief that in the great controversy that had convulsed the country the sympathies of the new President were with the South. And so it proved; whenever it became the duty of this northern President to show his hand on the slavery question, he invariably decided with the slaveholder.

In his cabinet we find three men of national fame. Marcy of New York, who had served in Polk's cabinet, became secretary of state; Jefferson Davis of Mississippi, secretary

¹³ Mr. King, who had gone to Cuba for his health, was there sworn into office as Vice President. He returned to his Alabama home a few weeks later, and died on April 18.

of war; and Caleb Cushing of Massachusetts, attorney-general. Marcy had for many years been a leader in New York, had been governor of the state and senator in Congress. His famous phrase "To the victors belong the spoils," has been quoted by unnumbered millions—at first as a happy statement of a policy accepted by all, now only to be condemned. Davis had risen rapidly in public life after the Mexican War, in which he had proved himself a brave and skillful officer. But his strange career was only begun, and we leave a further account of him to a later page. Cushing was one of the most learned men ever in public life in America. He had been a Whig in ante-Tyler days, had performed a most useful service as commissioner to China, and on his return had joined the little Tyler party; but on its collapse he refused to return to the Whig fold, and joined the Democrats. It was said that Cushing's linguistic knowledge was so extensive that he could converse with every foreign minister at Washington in the latter's own language. The other members of the Cabinet were inconspicuous, and even their names would not interest the reader. This Cabinet is the only one, even to this day, that remained unbroken during an entire presidential term.

Not long had Pierce been President when his popularity began to wane, and so it continued steadily to the end of his term. It was evident that he lacked executive ability and firmness. He received every office seeker with suavity of manner, and led him to believe that he would receive the desired appointment. But many had to be disappointed, and this failing gave the President much trouble and made him many enemies. But with all his vacillating he was constant in one thing—his desire to please the South and to crush

the Abolitionists.¹⁴ To annex Cuba was the first great aim of the administration.¹⁵ To further this end Buchanan was selected as minister to England, Mason to France, and Soule to Spain; all of whom were determined advocates of the project. These three ministers, directed by the President to meet at a convenient place to consider the subject, met at Ostend, a little town in Belgium, and issued an address, known as the Ostend Manifesto. In this they urged the transfer of Cuba to the United States, by purchase if possible, by force if necessary. This was not acted on by the administration.

In his inaugural address President Pierce had promised the country a rest from the distracting slavery question, and this promise he renewed in more emphatic words in his first annual message to Congress. And the people were pleased; the compromise as a final settlement was taking a firmer hold upon the public mind. The North had even become quiescent on the Fugitive Slave Law.¹⁶ The country was prosperous; railroad systems were extending in every direction; manufacturing and commerce were at high tide; the national treasury was full to overflowing. Moreover, the Democratic party had a powerful hold upon the country. Not only the President and both houses of Congress, but also the gov-

¹⁴ Cushing, who was, in an extreme sense, a northern man with southern principles, stated in a letter that the administration was determined to crush out abolitionism in every form. Cushing, as well as Pierce, came to sympathize with secession in the sixties.

¹⁵ Our filibusters had awakened apprehension in Europe, and in 1852 England and France had proposed a tripartite agreement with the United States to disclaim all intention to get possession of Cuba; but the United States declined to enter the agreement.

¹⁶ Sumner had made a powerful speech in the Senate, calling for the repeal of the law (July, 1852); but the effect of this had largely subsided.

ernor and legislature of nearly every state, were Democratic. Surely the party had every promise of another long lease of power. Such was the condition of the country and the party at the opening of the year 1854, when suddenly there broke forth from the political sky a storm more terrific than any that had preceded it in the history of the government. It came in the form of a legislative act, and its author was Stephen A. Douglas.

Douglas was one of the most brilliant and ambitious men in public life. Though less than forty years old, he had vied with the old leaders of the party for the presidential nomination in 1852, and had received nearly a hundred votes. His support, however, had come from the North, and it was necessary in those days for a candidate to win southern support in order to gain the presidency, or even the nomination of either of the great parties. Cass, Marcy, Cushing, Buchanan, Fillmore, Pierce, and even Webster had shown themselves ready to aid the slave power in its contest with the rising abolitionism of the North; but Douglas had done nothing to win the favor essential to the realization of his ambition. He was now chairman of the Senate committee on territories, and here was his opportunity.

The northern part of the Louisiana Purchase, a vast uninhabited region of nearly half a million square miles, lay northwestward from Missouri and extended to the boundary of British America. The territory was known as Nebraska. Douglas now brought a report before the Senate to give this region territorial organization. In this report were two statements of far-reaching importance: first, that the provision in the Compromise of 1850—that Utah and New Mexico be organized with no decision for or against slavery

—was designed to establish certain great principles, namely, that all other territories be organized in the same way—that is, the subject of slavery in each must be decided by its future inhabitants; second, that in the opinion of eminent statesmen Congress had no authority to legislate on the subject of slavery in the territories, and, therefore, the eighth section of the Missouri Bill of 1820 is null and void. Now the eighth section of the Missouri Bill is that which established the compromise line of $36^{\circ} 30'$.

In few words the above meant this: first, that Congress in deciding in 1850 to keep its hands off the slavery subject in Utah and New Mexico, meant that this decision should apply to all future territories—which every intelligent man in and out of Congress knew to be false; and second, that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional.

Douglas professed to believe that he had found a way by which to secure eternal rest for the country on the subject of slavery in the territories, by relegating the matter to the territories themselves. But Douglas knew better. He must have known that his bill, if it became a law, setting aside the Missouri Compromise, though not actually repealing it, would be sternly resisted at the North. The Congress of 1820 had no power to bind its successors; but that solemn agreement between the North and South that slavery be forever prohibited north of $36^{\circ} 30'$ in the Louisiana Purchase, made when Douglas was a toddling child of seven years, had received the sanction of the greatest statesmen of the time, and had stood like a wall for thirty-four years. It was more than an act of Congress. It was an agreement, almost as binding as a treaty, between two great sections of the country. What Mason and Dixon's line was to the East, the line of $36^{\circ} 30'$ was to the West. Could Douglas

now suppose that he could set aside this compact, and enable the slaveholders to fill the heart of the continent, even to the Canadian border, with their human property, without raising a storm of indignation? But the end had not yet come. Douglas knew that his report would please the South, though he had consulted with no southern men in its framing. Scarcely, however, had the country caught its breath when Dixon, a Kentucky Whig who was filling the unexpired term of the lamented Clay, arose and offered to the Nebraska Bill an amendment actually repealing the Missouri Compromise. This was startling to the Senate and especially so to Douglas. He had not intended to go to such lengths; but seeing that, if he rejected the amendment, he would displease the South and lose all credit for what he had done, he embodied the amendment in his report.

The rising storm of indignation at the North was now swelling in volume, and it threatened to become a resistless hurricane. Douglas saw that to escape being overwhelmed he must secure the support of the administration. President Pierce was known to disfavor the Dixon amendment,¹⁷ nor was Douglas in intimate relations with the President. But he knew that the secretary of war, Jefferson Davis, belonged to the inner circle of the President's counselors, and he believed that Davis could not oppose a measure so favorable to the South. Douglas therefore sought Davis, and Davis sought the President. The three men had a long conference on Sunday, January 22. The vacillating Pierce soon yielded, and the three agreed that the Missouri Compromise ought to be repealed. Only a few months before, Pierce had renewed his promise that the repose of the people should

¹⁷ This was shown by the *Washington Union*, the organ of the administration.

suffer no shock during his official term, if it were in his power to prevent it. Here was the opportunity of a lifetime, not only to keep a solemn pledge, but to show himself capable of making a stand on principle, and thus to do his country a great service and to make for himself a name in history. The opportunity was lost. Pierce desired the support of the South in the next presidential race; this fact would explain his action; so with Douglas. Of the three men Davis alone acted on principle and conviction.¹⁸

On the day following this conference Douglas offered a second bill in the Senate, embodying the substance of the first, with the addition that it provided for the repeal of the Missouri Compromise¹⁹ by declaring it inoperative, and divided the territory into two parts to be known as Kansas and Nebraska. The Illinois senator defended his bill with great power; but he had not smooth sailing. There were strong men in his own party whom he could not control. Before the close of January a protest known as an "Appeal of the Independent Democrats in Congress to the People of the United States," written by Chase and signed by the Free-soil Democrats, was published and sent broadcast through the North. This was a powerful arraignment of the proposed law, pronouncing it a "gross violation of a

¹⁸ The view of Professor Burgess, that Douglas may have been actuated by his exaggerated notion, as a radical Democrat, of the virtues of the western people and of the importance of local autonomy, should not be wholly rejected. But this view cannot alone account for Douglas's extraordinary action.

¹⁹ In actual practice the Missouri Compromise had been violated. By act of Congress in June, 1836, a large tract of land lying north of the Missouri River and belonging to the territory of Nebraska was incorporated into the state of Missouri. This was soon occupied by slaveholders with their slaves; but the matter attracted little attention at the time.

OPPOSITION TO KANSAS-NEBRASKA BILL 19

sacred pledge, a criminal betrayal of precious rights, . . . an atrocious plot to exclude from a vast unoccupied region immigrants from the Old World and free laborers from our own states." The Appeal was published in all parts of the free states, and the response of the people was astonishing for its suddenness and its vehemence.

Chase led the opposition, and his speech, on February 3, revealed his powers and stamped him as one of the strong-



est men of his time. Chase was followed by Seward, Wade, Sumner, and Edward Everett, all of whom took strong ground against the proposed legislation. Douglas's management of his bill in the Senate showed him a master parliamentarian. At length the time came that the final vote was to be taken. It was near midnight on the 3d of March when the Little Giant rose to close the debate. Small of stature, Douglas was nevertheless impressive in appearance, and as he arose on this occasion his face shone with animation and conscious power. Never before had he spoken with

such force as he did that night. The Senate chamber and the galleries were crowded, and, though Douglas spoke all night, the audience remained to hear the last word. Douglas knew that the bill would easily pass the Senate, but he also knew that the North had condemned him, and this was his great opportunity to vindicate himself before the people. The burden of his speech was an endeavor to show that the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, of which his critics had made so much, was only an incident of the bill before the Senate; that the main object was to establish the "fundamental principle of popular sovereignty," to relieve Congress and the country in future of all trouble about slavery in the territories, and to remove the vexed question from politics by leaving the whole matter to the inhabitants of the respective territories.

The sleeping city was roused that morning by the boom of cannon that announced the passage of the measure. As Chase walked down the Capitol steps, he exclaimed to Sumner, "They celebrate a present victory, but the echoes they awake will never rest until slavery itself shall die."

The bill then went to the House. Here the opposition was formidable, and the bill passed only after a fierce debate, amid some of the wildest scenes ever known in the House of Representatives. Among the negative votes was that of the sturdy old Missourian, Thomas H. Benton, who, having lost his seat in the Senate because of his independence on the slavery question, had become a member of the House.

The reception of the Kansas-Nebraska Act at the North was such as to make the politicians stand aghast. The voice of the people began to be heard while the measure was yet pending. It came through the press and the pulpit, and through great mass meetings in the large cities. A majority

of the northern state legislatures recorded their disapproval.²⁰ Douglas was denounced on every hand as the betrayer of his country, the Judas Iscariot, and a society of women in Ohio sent him thirty pieces of silver. His middle name, "Arnold," was emphasized to connect him with the archtraitor of the Revolution. Attempting to speak in his own city of Chicago, he was hooted off the stage. By his own statement he "could travel from Boston to Chicago by the light of his own effigies."

Douglas had made a frightful blunder. He and his followers had enacted into law a measure of vast moment, without having made it an issue in any campaign, without consulting their masters, the people. However popular, however powerful a political leader may be, if he presume too far on the rights and the patience of the multitude, he will find himself crushed by the ponderous weight of public opinion. Douglas was no doubt an honest man at heart. But in this daring play in the presidential game he had failed to count the cost. Brilliant, popular young leader that he was, he had won the American heart as few had ever done; but now he overstepped the bounds of public forbearance, and he soon found himself dashed to the ground like a broken toy, and his presidential prospects forever blasted.²¹

The promoters and friends of the Kansas-Nebraska Act could hardly have been sincere in their claim that it would take the slavery question out of national politics. Anyone might have foreseen that if the people of a territory had this matter to decide, and the friends of slavery and of freedom

²⁰ A few of them took no action. Illinois alone of all the Northern states approved the measure by a small majority of the legislature. The bill was received with great applause at the South.

²¹ Douglas now enjoyed popularity at the South; but this, as will appear later, he had to sacrifice in order to win back the North.

would meet on the ground, each aiming to gain the mastery, there would be a clash. And yet by this law Congress had bound itself not to interfere. The one and only instance in which this law was put into operation was in Kansas, and a sorry exhibition it was, as will be shown hereafter. Again, the seeds of endless strife were sown with the very inception of this bill. The South chose to understand it to mean that a territory has no right to prohibit slavery from its bounds, that it can do this only on becoming a state. On the other hand, the people of the North, including Douglas, took the ground that the people of a territory had the power to vote on the subject of slavery among them at any time during the territorial state. This point of contention alone proved that the Kansas-Nebraska bill had settled nothing.

This act had never been equaled in results by any legislation since the foundation of the government. It gave the finishing blow to the dying Whig party by a final alienation of its northern and southern wings. It brought disruption to the Democratic party, alienated the German vote, hitherto almost solidly Democratic, sacrificed the prestige of the party in New England, in Pennsylvania, and in the Northwest, and it marked the beginning of the end of the long lease of Democratic rule, which had begun with the century under Jefferson. It opened the way for the founding of another great political party with antislavery extension as its corner stone.²²

FOUNDING OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

The powerful revulsion in Democratic ranks, occasioned by the Kansas-Nebraska bill, would not subside. Thousands of men who had adhered to the party of Jefferson for a

²² Rhodes, Vol. I, p. 490.

lifetime, men who had stood by Jackson on the bank issue, by Van Buren on the subtreasury, who had adhered to the policy of Polk on the tariff and the results of the Mexican War, men who frowned on abolitionism and made no quarrel with the Fugitive Slave Law—thousands of such men found the Kansas-Nebraska Law unendurable, and they broke away from the party of their fathers and wandered homeless, seeking a political fold. Then there were the northern Whigs. Their party was shattered to fragments, and its future was hopeless. Some of them joined the Democrats, but the great majority were deterred by prejudice, by conviction, or by the Kansas-Nebraska Law. The old Free-soilers were also ready for some new movement.

A third element of homeless wanderers came a little later from the American or Know-nothing party, to which it is now time to give a moment's notice.

From far back in the thirties a strong feeling of nativism, aimed against foreigners, and especially against Roman Catholic foreigners, showed itself in different parts of the country, and it often resulted in riots. In 1841 a state convention in Louisiana founded the American Republican party, afterward called the Native-American party. This movement, whose chief principles were to put only native born Americans into office and to extend the naturalization period to twenty-one years, soon spread to the North. It elected a mayor in New York City in 1844, and had half a dozen members of Congress the following year. But as the Mexican War and slavery came to absorb public attention, the movement subsided, and not a member did the party send to the Congress that met in 1849. But the upheavals in Europe in 1848 and the discovery of gold in California caused a rush of emigrants from Europe greater than ever

before to the shores of America.²³ This reawakened the old anti-foreigner feeling, and in 1852 the Know-nothing party, based on the principles of the old Native-American party, was founded. At first it was a secret, oath-bound organization, and when its members were asked on what the order was based and what it stood for, they answered, as their oath required, "I don't know;" hence the name Know-nothing. The movement spread like a conflagration. Many joined it, not because they were in sympathy with it, but because, as Von Holst says, they were ready to grasp, "with impatient and uncritical zeal, the first new thing" that pleased their fancy.²⁴ After the Compromise of 1850, and the crushing defeat of Scott in 1852, a great number of Whigs, no longer interested in their own party, joined the Know-nothings. The secret vote of the party determined many local elections and upset all calculations of the politicians.

As the Know-nothings grew to national dimensions, they threw aside their secrecy, and nominated their own candidates for office. In 1854 they carried the elections in Massachusetts and Delaware. The following year, when the revulsion against the Kansas-Nebraska Democrats was at its height, the Know-nothings carried a majority of the Northern states and a few in the South. But the party could not endure as a permanent political factor. It lacked the moral background, the broad, fundamental principles necessary to the governing of the nation. Moreover, it refused to express an opinion on the greatest issue of the times, the extension of slavery into the territories. Most men had positive convictions on this question, and they

²³ McMasters's "With the Fathers," p. 97.

²⁴ Vol. V, p. 82.

would remain with a party that refused to take one side or the other only so long as there was no better one to join. The party began crumbling before the close of the year 1855, and in consequence a vast number of voters was free to join the new political party that was about to be formed.

With all this material at hand—the anti-Nebraska Democrats, the old line Whigs, the free-soilers, and the fragments of the dissolving Know-nothing party—the time was ripe for the formation of a new political party. In the early spring of 1854 the rumor was rife at Washington that a new national party would be formed on the basis of non-extension of slavery; but some of the northern leaders, including Seward, were not favorable to the new movement. Seward took the ground that the Whig party should be re-organized on the slavery subject, and continued under the old name. There were several objections to this, the chief of which was that the Democrats who wished to join the movement were loath to unite with their old political rival. Meantime, while the politicians were undecided, there was a movement of the people. As early as March 20, 1854, in the little town of Ripon, Wisconsin, several hundred citizens met in the townhall, and passed resolutions declaring that a new national party should be formed, and they suggested the name Republican. A similar movement in Vermont followed a few days later. On the 6th of July a great mass meeting was held at Jackson, Michigan, and in the resolutions adopted amid the greatest enthusiasm it demanded the repeal of the Kansas-Nebraska and the Fugitive Slave laws, pronounced slavery a “moral, social, and political evil,” and agreed, under the name Republican, to oppose the extension of slavery. On the 13th of July anti-Nebraska state conventions were held in Wisconsin,

Indiana, Ohio, and Vermont. Nothing was easier to see than that the North was on the eve of an unusual uprising of the people.

The temperance question also received much attention at this period. In 1851 Maine passed her anti-liquor law, which is still in force. The movement spread through the North, and resulted in the enactment of prohibitory laws in Michigan and in most of the New England states. The temperance movement was therefore a powerful political factor at the moment when the new party was coming into existence, and the leading temperance men were, for the most part, among the leaders against the extension of slavery.

Soon came the autumn elections, and the anti-Nebraska people were successful in almost every northern state. They won their victories under different names, such as Fusion, Whig, anti-Nebraska, and the like, the name Republican not having come into general use, but the slavery question was the chief issue in every case. The House of Representatives that passed Douglas's famous bill was Democratic by a majority of eighty-four; in the next House the Democrats were in the minority by seventy-five. The party had lost in the North above three hundred and forty thousand in the popular vote. This was the preliminary answer of the North to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise; but this was only a beginning.

The Thirty-fourth Congress met in December, 1855. In the House the Democratic majority had been swept away, but the opposition was a motley crowd. There were Whigs, anti-Nebraskas, Know-nothings, and Republicans, all commingled, and while they were easily able to prevent the election of a Democratic speaker, they found it very diffi-

cult to concentrate on a choice of their own. At length their attention was turned toward Nathaniel P. Banks of Massachusetts. Banks was a man of commanding presence and of fluent rhetoric. He had been elected to the preceding Congress as a Democrat, but, having now joined the Republican movement, he stood for the restoration of the Missouri Compromise. After a most exciting contest of two months, the House having decided that a plurality should elect, the prize fell to Banks. This election was pronounced by Greeley the first victory of freedom over slavery in the memory of living men.

We return to our subject, the formation of the Republican party. During the speakership contest, the opposition was often spoken of as "Republican." This the Democrats did not like, as it was the old name used by Jefferson to designate their own party in its youth. They suggested, therefore, that the new organization be termed "Black Republican," as it persistently favored the black man. The Republican party, however, had as yet no official existence. The movement had been spontaneous, and had spread over the entire North, and it was left for Pittsburg to become the official birthplace of the new party. But three weeks after the election of Banks, a national convention met in that city, and all the free states except California were represented. Francis P. Blair, the former friend and confidant of President Jackson, was made chairman, and the address was drawn up by Henry J. Raymond, editor of the *New York Times*. Here the Republican party was officially founded, with the non-extension of slavery as its chief corner stone. Meeting on Washington's birthday, the convention called for another national convention of the newly founded party, to be held in Philadelphia on the anniversary

of the battle of Bunker Hill, for the purpose of nominating candidates for President and Vice President. This brings us to the

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1856

On the same day of the meeting of the Pittsburg convention the American or Know-nothing party held its national convention in Philadelphia. The keynote of its platform was that Americans must rule America. It nominated former President Fillmore for President, and Andrew Jackson Donelson of Tennessee for Vice President. Before adjourning, however, this convention suffered a serious disruption. The northern delegates demanded an expression on the slavery question, and, on being refused, they, to the number of seventy-one, seceded from the convention. They afterward met and nominated Speaker Banks; but he declined, and they joined the Republicans. The scattered remaining fragments of the Whig party ratified the nominations of the Know-nothings, in a convention held in Baltimore in September.

The Democratic convention, which met at Cincinnati on the 2d of June, directed all eyes to itself. Three prominent candidates had been freely talked of for several months—Douglas, Pierce, and James Buchanan. The support of Douglas and Pierce came chiefly from the South. But there were grave fears that neither could carry a single northern state. The call for Buchanan came from the North, and for two reasons he was a far stronger candidate than either of the others: first, he had spent the preceding three years in England and was the only leading man in the party who was not tainted with Kansas-Nebraskaism; second, he was probably the only Democrat who could secure the vote

of Pennsylvania, which was considered essential to success. Buchanan, though not the choice of the South, was not unacceptable to that section, for in his long congressional career he had never given a vote contrary to southern interests. He was expected, however, to give an expression on the repeal of the Missouri Compromise; and this he did by stating that it met his approval.²⁵ For this the northern Democrats forgave him, as well as for the part he had taken in the Ostend Manifesto; and the convention nominated him on the seventeenth ballot.

John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky was nominated for Vice President. The platform adopted declared the satisfaction of the party with the Kansas-Nebraska Law, and pronounced against all attempts to agitate the slavery question, "under whatever shape or color" the attempt should be made.

The Republican convention met in Philadelphia at the appointed time. No party was ever founded on purer motives than was this new-born party. No convention was ever composed of more unselfish, true-hearted, patriotic men than was this convention; and yet, strange to say, no great convention ever made a greater blunder in the selection of a candidate than did this one.²⁶ The serious defect in the party was its want of a national leader. Seward was the leader of Republican thought, and was the logical candidate, but he had not identified himself with the party at its founding; and although he had now done so, he refused to come forward, or to have his friends put him forward, as an aspirant for the nomination. Chase was second in im-

²⁵ Buchanan had expressed this sentiment in a letter some months previously. This letter was now published.

²⁶ See Rhodes, Vol. II, p. 182.

portance. He had been elected governor of Ohio the preceding year by a majority of seventy-five thousand. But he had long been known as a Free-soil Democrat, and for this and other reasons he failed to secure a large following. Lincoln of Illinois had met the arguments of Douglas the year before with unanswerable logic on the great question before the country; but he was little known out of his own state, and his name was not proposed for the first place on the ticket. The aged Judge McLean, a man of spotless integrity, was seriously considered by many. He had served in the cabinets of Monroe and John Quincy Adams, and had been appointed to the supreme bench by Jackson. But all this was against him. The party was newly born. It was filled with young blood; it stepped forth in the consciousness of the strength of youth. To bury the past, to grapple with the things of to-day and of the future, became its unwritten motto. And this feeling led to a desire for a candidate without a political past, one who would inspire the youth; and the party found its man in John C. Frémont of California.

We have noticed on a preceding page how Frémont had won public attention by his romantic love affair and marriage with Jessie Benton, by his daring explorations in the wild regions of the Rocky Mountains, and by his driving the Mexicans out of California. These things had cast a glamour of romance about the name of Frémont—and that was all. If he were more than an adventurer, the world had not discovered the fact. Of a knowledge of statesmanship he had developed no symptoms. If he were a man of character, and were capable of assuming responsibility, the public had not yet found it out. And yet this great convention, composed of wise, educated, experienced men, at

a moment when a great crisis in the government was seen to be approaching, nominated Frémont for President on the first ballot by an almost unanimous vote. Nor was he a dark horse; his candidacy had been deliberately discussed for months. But perhaps this was all the work of a Providential Hand. Had Seward, or Chase, or McLean been nominated, he might have been elected, and the Civil War might have come too soon. The new party needed four years more to solidify, and it needed a mighty man at the helm, who was to develop within the four years.

The convention chose William L. Dayton of New Jersey for second place on the ticket. It adopted a platform whose keynote was a demand that Congress prohibit in the territories those "twin relics of barbarism, polygamy and slavery."

The campaign was almost as remarkable as that of 1840. There was a deep and irreconcilable difference between the northern and southern Democrats concerning their different interpretations of the Kansas-Nebraska Law. This it was tacitly decided to suppress, though four years hence, when this difference could be smothered no longer, it tore the party to pieces.

The Democrats mercilessly probed the character of Frémont, accusing him of corrupt dealings in California; nor were these charges ever successfully answered. Buchanan, on the other hand, was a man of unassailable character, and the conservative men of the country felt that the nation would be safe in his hands. In many of the Republican meetings they shouted lustily for "free speech, free soil, and Frémont"; but in the main the great issue of slavery was discussed, rather than the candidate.

Before the close of the campaign many thoughtful Re-

publicans began to feel that their convention had made a mistake. The South was free in threats to secede, if Frémont were elected.²⁷ These threats the Republicans refused to take seriously, but the events of four years later proved the depths of their foundation. But the calamity was averted. Buchanan was elected, and the dragon was left to slumber four years more.

Buchanan secured the votes of all the Southern states, save one, of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Indiana, Illinois, and California, while Frémont carried all the rest of the North, and Fillmore the solitary state of Maryland.²⁸ The charge against the Republican party, that it was sectional and not national, was shown by the returns to be true. In eleven Southern states not a vote was cast for Frémont, and in none of the remaining four did his vote reach four hundred.²⁹ The subsequent career of Frémont showed the wisdom of the country in not electing him President in 1856. All parties now turned to the President elect. Would he lean toward the North or the South? A neutral ground was hardly possible. He professed to believe, as was shown by his inaugural address, that slavery agitation was approaching its end, whereas it was only approaching its worst stage. Four of the new Cabinet were from the slave states, the ablest of whom was Howell Cobb of Georgia, secretary of the treasury; and three, with Cass as secretary of state, were from the free states. There was one subject, which we must now consider, the most exciting question of the

²⁷ Ex-President Tyler wrote that "the success of the Black Republicans would be the knell of the Union." Governor Wise of Virginia wrote that if Frémont were elected, the Union could not last a year.

²⁸ The electoral vote was Buchanan, 174; Fremont, 114; and Fillmore, 8.

²⁹ See Stanwood, p. 210.



1808—SALMON PORTLAND CHASE—1873.

From an enlargement of an original Brady negative in the possession of Frederick H. Meserve
New York.

times, to which the new administration must give immediate attention.

THE STRUGGLE FOR KANSAS

We must now go back a few years and take up the tragic story of Kansas. No other state in the Union, not even those bathed in the blood of the Indian wars of colonial days, can surpass this state in the fierce contests of its early years. While this book makes no pretense of giving state history, the early history of Kansas must be narrated, as the subject belongs to national history. The territory of Kansas comprised the vast undulating prairie, covered with Indian reservations, extending westward from Missouri to the base of the Rocky Mountains.** Scarcely had the Kansas-Nebraska bill become a law, in 1854, when the people of western Missouri began pouring into the territory and taking up claims with the avowed purpose of making it a slave state. Kansas was a prize of unmeasured value to the South. The balance in the Senate had been broken by the admission of California. If now the slave power could regain its equal representation by making Kansas a slave state, if the balance could be thus restored, never again would a free state be suffered to enter the Union without its being offset by the admission of a slave state. So reasoned the slaveholders. They believed further that Kansas was the key to the whole Southwest. "If Kansas is abolitionized," wrote Senator Atchison, "Missouri ceases to be a slave state, New Mexico becomes a free state, California remains a free state; but if we secure Kansas as a slave state, Missouri is secure; New Mexico and southern California, if not all of it, becomes a slave state; in a word, the

** Since cut down to 81,700 square miles. It then comprised 126,000.

prosperity or ruin of the whole South depends on the Kansas struggle." ²¹ Hence we see the vital importance to the South of securing Kansas to slavery, whatever the cost. This explains the early rush of the Missourians into the territory.

Meantime the people of New England, hearing of this action of the Missouri people, determined to make a bold, extensive movement toward claiming Kansas for freedom. Eli Thayer of Massachusetts, a shrewd, practical Yankee, had in the early spring organized the Emigrant Aid Company for the purpose of planting free labor in Kansas. He soon enlisted the interest and aid of such public-spirited men as Charles Francis Adams, Amos A. Lawrence, Edward Everett Hale, and Horace Greeley, raised a large sum of money, and by July he had a company of emigrants moving toward Kansas. This company, led by Charles Robinson, who had become inured to frontier life in California, was augmented along the way, and by December, 1854, several thousand settlers from the free states had pitched their tents on the rich bottom lands of the Kansas River. They founded Lawrence, Topeka, and other towns, and gave every indication that they had come to stay. The Missourians, who had founded Atchison, Lecompton, and Leavenworth along the Missouri, determined to drive the Free-soilers from the territory.

President Pierce had appointed Andrew H. Reeder of Pennsylvania governor of Kansas. Reeder was a positive Democrat, in full sympathy with the Kansas-Nebraska Law, and a strong friend of the South. The interests of slavery were thought to be safe in his hands. But Reeder was honest, and when he reached Kansas and witnessed

²¹ *New York Tribune*, November 7, 1855.

the violence of the Missouri people and their determination to make Kansas a slave state by fair means or foul, his soul revolted against such proceedings, and he resolved to see fair play. The election of a territorial legislature brought matters to a crisis. On election day five thousand Missourians, led by United States Senator Atchison, came across the border armed with muskets, pistols, and bowie-knives.²² This invading force drove out or intimidated the election judges who were not favorable to them, and carried the election in the most high-handed manner. A recent census had shown that there were but 2,905 voters in the territory, but over six thousand votes were cast.

When this legislature met it proceeded to enact a code of laws that may be classed among the curiosities of modern literature. A few specimens are as follows: "Any person . . . convicted of raising a rebellion . . . of slaves, free negroes, or mulattoes, in this territory shall suffer death." "If any free person shall, by speaking, writing, or printing, advise, persuade, or induce, any slaves to rebel, etc., . . . such person shall suffer death." It also provided the death penalty, or ten years' imprisonment, for any one who should aid in the escape of a slave, and that no person opposed to slavery should sit on a jury in the prosecution for the violations of the above-mentioned laws. An imprisonment of two years was imposed for any one who denied the legal existence of slavery in the territory! All these acts were vetoed by Governor Reeder and passed over his veto. The laws, it will be noticed, took no account of the popular sovereignty, advocated by Douglas, but assumed

²² Atchison had been chosen president of the Senate on the death of Vice President King, and for several years there was but one life between him and the presidency of the United States.

that slavery already existed in the territory;²² and this without putting the subject to a vote of the people. At this moment there were less than fifty actual settlers in the territory who owned slaves; more than nine tenths of the people were devoted to freedom. The bias of Governor Reeder was wholly with the proslavery party when he went to Kansas; but he had an honest desire to be fair to the other side. This was wholly displeasing to the proslavery party, and they besought the President to recall him. Mr. Pierce, who was now notoriously subservient to the slave power, heeded their wishes, dismissed Reeder and appointed Wilson Shannon, a former member of Congress from Ohio, to fill the place. But Reeder did not return to the East; he became a resident of Kansas and joined the free-state party. His instincts of a lifetime on the slave question had been revolutionized by a few months among the border ruffians in Kansas.

The ostensible reason for dismissing Reeder was for speculating in land; the real reason was that he did not please the proslavery party.

The free-state settlers were not disposed to sit idle in the face of the usurpation of the Missourians. Led by Robinson, they called a convention to meet at Big Springs; they repudiated the spurious legislature and its infamous laws, nominated Reeder for Congress, and fixed October 9, 1855, as election day. The proslavery party set October 1, as election day, and nominated Whitfield, one of their number, for Congress. Thus the two parties voted on different days; each elected its man, to be sure; both men went to Washington, and both were refused admission to the House.

²² Von Holst, Vol. V, p. 159.

But the free-state settlers did not stop at this. At the election of October 9 they chose delegates to a constitutional convention. This convention met at Topeka the same month, framed a constitution making Kansas a free state, and, after its ratification by the people at an election in December, at which the proslavery party refused to vote, applied for admission into the Union.⁴⁴ Under this constitution Robinson was chosen governor. But in January President Pierce, in a special message, denounced the whole Topeka movement as rebellion, and declared his intention to put down all such proceedings with national troops. The Topeka legislature again met, and was dispersed by United States troops, and Robinson, Reeder, and others were indicted for high treason.

Such was the condition in Kansas at the opening of the presidential year of 1856, and it became one of the leading issues of the campaign. The whole country was aroused over reports from Kansas, and it was impossible that such a question remain long out of the halls of Congress, notwithstanding the claim of Douglas that his famous bill would remove the slavery question from national politics. In May, 1856, Senator Sumner made a powerful speech on "The Crime against Kansas." The speech was a fearful arraignment of the slave power. But the speaker went out of his way to abuse certain senators whom he did not like, especially Senator Butler of South Carolina, who was then absent from the city, and who had made no special personal attack on Sumner.

⁴⁴The impression that the free-state people were abolitionists was erroneous. This free-state constitution forbade free negroes, as well as slaves, from entering the state. The Abolitionists of the Garrison type would have nothing to do with the Kansas movement from the beginning.

a thing in its true light. He believed that the only way to free the slaves was to kill the slaveholders. "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins," said John Brown.

A few free-state men, one of whom was a neighbor of Brown, had been killed by the opposite party, and Brown determined that an equal number of them should suffer death to expiate the crime. He organized a night raid — his sons and a few others — and started on his bloody errand. They called at one farmhouse after another and slew the men in cold blood. He did not inquire if they were guilty or not guilty; enough if they belonged to the opposite party. One man was dragged from the presence of a sick wife. Her pleadings that he be spared were not heeded. He was murdered in cold blood in the road before his house. Before the end of that bloody night raid Brown's party had put six or seven men to death — for no crime except that they belonged to the opposite party and had made threats — an offense of which Brown's party were equally guilty. When the news of this ghastly work was flashed over the country, the people in general refused to believe it; and to the credit of the free-state people in Kansas, they repudiated it as wholly unwarranted.

The war went on in Kansas. Armed guerrilla bands traversed the country, and fought when they met opponents. About two hundred people were killed in one year. But it is needless to give further details. Governor Shannon, on coming to Kansas, was even more favorable to the South than Reeder had been; but even he grew weary of the demands and the methods of the slavery party, and resigned the office. John W. Geary of Pennsylvania was appointed the next governor. Geary had been in the Mex-

ican War, and was the first commander of the City of Mexico after its surrender. He was afterward the first mayor of San Francisco, but had returned to the East. He accepted the governorship of Kansas, arrived in the territory in September, and soon had a semblance of order among the people. Geary was a strong executive, and, like Reeder, he honestly desired to do justice to both sides. The emigration from the North and the South still continued; but the North had a great advantage over the South. In the North there was a large floating population who found it easy to pack their goods and go to the West; but the slaveholder was also a land owner. He found it unprofitable, almost impossible, to migrate to the new territory; and if he induced the poor whites of his section to go, they were apt to espouse the cause of the free-soilers. It was now believed throughout the country that Kansas would become a free state. But the Missourians had not given up. They soon came to dislike Governor Geary. They threatened to assassinate him, and they made his duties so uncomfortable that he resigned the position on the 4th of March, the day on which James Buchanan became President of the United States. Behold, the third of the Kansas-Nebraska bill Democrats who had gone west to put that popular-sovereignty law into operation—and all had turned free state or had resigned because they could not endure the methods of the slavery party.

James Buchanan, during the campaign of the preceding summer, had promised that Kansas should have justice if he were elected. Many supported him on this promise. We shall see if he kept his word. He chose for governor Robert J. Walker of Mississippi, his life-long friend, his fellow-member of the Polk Cabinet, and the author of the

So much for Robert J. Walker; but James Buchanan—

On the 2d of February, 1858, President Buchanan did the chief historic act of his long public life. Fillmore had signed the Fugitive Slave Law because he could scarcely help doing so—the country was in danger. Pierce had agreed to the Kansas-Nebraska bill because he hoped thereby to make his reelection sure. Both are unforgiven by the American people. But Buchanan did worse than either. There was no danger of secession at this moment. Buchanan had declared that he would not be a candidate for reelection. He had nothing to lose. Now was his opportunity to make a stand for the right, to cover his name with honor and to make himself a hero in the eyes of future America. But he lacked the requisite backbone; his subserviency to the hypnotic influence of the slave power was complete; he threw away the opportunity of a lifetime.

On the 2d of February he sent to Congress a copy of the Lecompton constitution, which he knew to have been conceived in iniquity and born in sin, and urged that Kansas be admitted under it, declaring that Kansas is “at this moment as much a slave state as Georgia or South Carolina.” The most astonishing thing about this was the striking example it gave of the power of the South over its devotees from the North. Buchanan was not at heart an unjust man, and yet no living man to-day can believe that in this case he acted on principle. He was the victim of hypnotism.

Now for a second time another great figure takes the center of the stage—Stephen A. Douglas. Four years ago Douglas, standing in the same place, had pleaded for a bad cause—the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. Now he stands for a principle, for justice; and the millions that execrated him then now admire and applaud him to the echo.

He had shown himself a giant then ; now he becomes a hero. There is no love stronger than the love for an old enemy who has become a friend. What were the feelings of Douglas when he saw the miserable failure of his boasted popular sovereignty, we know not. He owed the country much for his, possibly unintentional, deception ; and he partially paid the debt. Buchanan might truckle to the slave power without a visible reason. Not so with Douglas. Buchanan was a follower ; Douglas was a leader. He had sacrificed much to win the South in the hope of gaining the presidency. That hope gone, he was ready to be himself, to break with the South for the sake of justice.

Douglas saw that the Lecompton constitution was the product of fraud, and determined to oppose it. Calling on the President some time before the sending of the message of February 2, he declared his intention to oppose the Lecompton constitution in the Senate, unless it were honestly submitted to the voters of Kansas. The President became enraged ; he warned Douglas that no leading Democrat ever broke with the administration without being crushed. Douglas answered defiantly and went his way. Soon after this the subject came before the Senate, and Douglas took the floor against the Lecompton constitution. His speech was great. Never before had he displayed his powers to greater advantage. "The administration and the slave power are broken," wrote Seward to his wife ; "the triumph of freedom is not only assured, but near." Douglas won, and the Lecompton constitution was defeated, not in the Senate, but in the House. And Douglas won more ; he re-won the laurels he had lost in the North, and became again the Democratic idol in that section, so to remain to the last moment of his life. But Douglas had not espoused the

cause of the slave, nor even that of free Kansas. He had no apparent convictions on slavery, and professed not to care if it was "voted down or voted up." He simply stood for justice in Kansas, and it was only justice that the North was now demanding.

Our story of "Bleeding Kansas" is near its end. The people of the territory eventually did vote on the Lecompton constitution and defeated it by more than ten thousand majority. Congress had meantime passed the "English bill," introduced by W. H. English, a member of the House from Indiana, by which Kansas was offered a large grant of public land, if the people would adopt the Lecompton constitution. But this bribe was rejected also; and the South now abandoned all hope of making Kansas a slave state. At length Kansas entered the Union on the eve of the Great Rebellion as a free state. Buchanan's policy cost his party dear. It swept New York, New Jersey, and even Pennsylvania into the Republican column.²⁹ And it cost *him* dear. This act concerning Kansas did more than all else to place the name of Buchanan among the least honored names of American Presidents.

DRED SCOTT DECISION

Two days after Mr. Buchanan became President the most famous Supreme Court decision in the annals of the United States was announced to the country.

Dred Scott was a negro slave owned by Dr. Emerson, an army surgeon in the employ of the government. For some years the doctor was stationed in Illinois, then at Fort Snelling in the territory that afterward became Minnesota. Here he held his slave for two years, when he returned to

²⁹ Forney's "Anecdotes of Public Men," Vol. I, p. 120.

his home in Missouri. Meantime Dred Scott had married a woman of his own race, owned by the same master, and they had two children. After their return to Missouri, and after they had been sold to another master, Dred Scott brought suit for his freedom and that of his family, on the ground that they had been illegally held in bondage in a territory dedicated to freedom by the Missouri Compromise. He won in a St. Louis court, but the decision was reversed by the Supreme Court of Missouri, after which the case was carried to the United States Circuit Court, and then to the Supreme Court of the United States. The case in itself was of little importance, but for the deep constitutional questions it involved. At first the Supreme Court intended to confine itself to the simple case in hand; but here was an opportunity to make a decision on the constitutionality of the Missouri restriction of 1820, and the opportunity was not thrown away. As five of the nine justices were from slave states, it was believed that the court would pronounce in favor of the doctrine of Calhoun, which had taken a powerful hold on the southern heart; namely, that Congress has no power to prohibit slavery in any United States territory.

The opinion rendered by Chief Justice Taney was the one that attracted general attention, though six of his fellow-justices pronounced similar decisions, while two, Justices Curtis and McLean, dissented. In this decision the chief justice not only remanded Dred Scott to slavery; ⁴⁰ he went out of his way to solemnly pronounce the Missouri Compromise line null and void (though this point had not been considered by the lower courts), and he denied the right of Congress or of a territorial legislature to make any restrictions concerning slavery in any territory. He also affirmed

* Dred Scott and his family were afterward set free by their owner.

that no slave or descendant of slaves had the right to sue in the courts. He declared that no negroes born of slave parents were citizens of the United States at the time of forming the Constitution, nor had Congress or any state the right to make them or their descendants citizens. He quoted with apparent approval the prevalent feeling, as he claimed, of earlier times, that the negro had no rights that a white man was bound to respect, and asserted further that at the time of the adoption of the Constitution "the unhappy black race was never thought of or spoken of except as property."

In this last statement the chief justice was woefully in error. Even before the Revolution Lord Mansfield had rendered his famous decision which forbade slavery on English soil and lifted the black man to the level of other men before the law; in our own country most of the leading men of the early period—Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, and others—strongly favored the ultimate emancipation of all slaves. Jefferson, when President, demanded the return of the three black men who had been seized on the deck of the *Chesapeake*; and even the Constitution itself speaks of *persons* bound to service, referring to the negroes, and provides that three fifths of them be counted in making the census.⁴¹ How can Taney's statement that the black man was considered only as property stand before such facts as these? The assertion that a slave or a descendant of slaves had no standing before the law must fall before the patent facts of history, for, as Justice Curtis pointed out, in five of thirteen states at the formation of the Union colored men had the right to vote. The decision that the Missouri restriction was invalid rendered the repeal of that measure in the

⁴¹ See the opinion rendered by Justice Curtis.



1813—STEPHEN ARNOLD DOUGLAS—1861.

From an original Brady negative in the War Department, Washington, D.C.

Kansas-Nebraska Law superfluous, and annihilated Douglas's theory of popular sovereignty. The Republican party, which had carried eleven states in the recent election, had been founded on the principle of congressional prohibition of slavery in the territories, which the court now pronounced forever beyond the power of Congress.

This extraordinary decision pleased the ultra-slaveholders of the South, and it stunned the North. But it had defenders at the North, led by Stephen A. Douglas, who took much pride in the fact that the Missouri Compromise, which his bill had repealed, had now been pronounced null and void by the highest tribunal of the land; but he failed to comprehend that this same decision had rendered his boasted popular sovereignty a dead letter. The great body of the people of the North, however, condemned this unjust decision of the court.

Roger B. Taney had succeeded the great jurist, John Marshall, having been appointed by President Jackson as a reward for faithfulness in removing the deposits from the United States Bank. Taney was a man of singularly pure and upright life; he was also a great lawyer and jurist; he served his country long and faithfully; but the great public of to-day remembers him only for the odious Dred Scott decision, and with this his name is and must ever be inseparably linked. Yet he probably did what he believed to be right; he simply voiced the sentiment of the slaveholding interests to which he belonged.

Could the people continue to revere that august tribunal which had never before ceased to command their profound respect? Must they accept this decision as the final word on this great question on which the country was divided? If so, the Republican party must disband or at least abandon

the fundamental principle on which it was founded, and millions of men and women must give up their political conscience of a lifetime. But no such result followed. The fact is that Taney had descended from giving a judicial decision to a discussion of a political question from a partisan standpoint. He had grappled, for partisan reasons, with constitutional questions on which he had not been called to make a decision. If, then, the esteem in which the court had hitherto been held was lessened by this decision, the fault lay wholly with the court. It must not be forgotten that though the Supreme Court passes judgment on matters of the people, the people as a whole sit in judgment on the court, and the latter exists for their good and is their servant.

The Dred Scott decision brought forth severe criticisms from the North. Many were fierce with anger. The slave power was aggressive as never before. It had full control of the government. Would it become national and over-spread the whole land? The Kansas-Nebraska Law was audacious; it threw the country into a state of exceeding disquiet. Now came the Dred Scott decision, and this was followed by the attempt of the administration to force the Lecompton constitution on Kansas. These powerful blows were dealt, not by the people, but by the politicians. The great public writhed like a wounded giant, conscious of superior strength, but undecided what to do. But every blow dealt by the slave power contributed to its downfall in the end,—merely awakened the greater fury and hastened the final appeal to the sword.

THE LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATES

The second senatorial term of Stephen A. Douglas was drawing to a close. The legislature to be chosen in Illinois

in 1858 must name his successor. He was again popular throughout the North. When it was seen that his popular sovereignty would make Kansas, and of course all territories north of it, free states; ⁴² when it was seen that Douglas, by his admirable courage in the face of an angry administration, had saved Kansas from the Lecompton abomination, his star again rose to the zenith. Many Republicans now joined in applauding him, and the leading eastern members of that party favored his return to the Senate, in the hope that his fight with the administration would redound to Republican advantage.

Douglas was one of the most striking figures of his generation. Born among the New England hills two months before the death of his father, he migrated to the prairied West in early manhood. Settling in Illinois without money and without friends, he taught school and read law. He soon found the field for which above all else he was fitted—the field of politics. After serving in various official stations in his adopted state, he entered the lower House of Congress in 1843. At first he was uncouth in manners, but he quickly adapted himself to the ways of polite society and soon became a central figure in the highest social circles. "To see him threading the glittering crowd with a pleasant smile or a kind word for everybody, one would take him for a trained courtier." ⁴³ But he was in his real element among men. He would stand in the midst of an adoring throng and entertain them with a western story or with his flashing wit, or he would stand on the rostrum in the presence of thousands and hold their unbroken attention for hours with his melodious eloquence. He was hale and winning, cordial

⁴² This was before the Dred Scott decision was rendered.

⁴³ Forney's "Anecdotes," Vol. I, p. 147.

and full of good cheer. Forgiving and generous, he never sought revenge on an enemy. In 1847 Douglas was promoted to the Senate, and in a few years he was an acknowledged leader and the readiest debater on its floor. His wonderful power over men was shown by his putting the Kansas-Nebraska bill through Congress in the face of the mighty hurricane of criticism that was rising against him; and he showed power in regaining his lost laurels in the North. His sway in the West was undisputed until the rise of a rival who was soon to outstrip him.

The Republicans of Illinois were unwilling to follow the advice of the eastern leaders and help reëlect Douglas to the Senate. Douglas had been their political foe from far back in old Whig days, and they could not be persuaded to make him their champion. They produced their own candidate for the Senate in the person of Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln was a still more striking figure than Douglas. Born in the slave state of Kentucky, among the lowliest of the lowly, his early life was spent in poverty and want. His mother was a woman of excellent good sense, and, it is claimed, of strong intellect. His father, who belonged to the class of poor whites, was a carpenter by trade, but was usually out of employment. He was shiftless, lazy, and ignorant, and he scarcely provided his family with the necessities of life. All rules and theories of heredity are scattered to the winds in attempting to account for the genius of Lincoln. While he was yet a child his mother died. The father moved with his family to southern Indiana and married a widow with several children, and the double family spent ten years in a miserable hut in the wilderness. Meantime Lincoln, being intensely anxious to educate himself, though he attended school only a few months during

his boyhood, studied diligently the few books that came within his reach. He became a deep student of the Bible and of Shakespeare, and he mastered the books of Euclid. Removing to Illinois at the age of twenty-one, he became in turn farmer, rail splitter, storekeeper, postmaster, surveyor, and river boatman, and he served a few months in the Black Hawk War in 1832, though he was not under fire.

Lincoln felt that he was destined to do something in the great world of which he yet knew so little. He was unsettled and discontented; he flitted from one thing to another. The years passed, and at the age of twenty-five he had not settled in a permanent vocation. He loved to mingle with men; he was exceedingly popular among his fellows, was full of droll stories, loved the horse race and the cockfight; but withal, his face was set with a melancholy that nothing could remove. This may have been caused in part by his long years spent in physical toil in the frowning forest, while his soul was longing for light, for knowledge, for opportunity.⁴⁴ His marriage was an unhappy one, and the want of domestic pleasure threw him the more among men, and fitted him the better for his great life work. He served in the Illinois legislature, read law, and was admitted to the bar at the age of twenty-eight. In 1846 he was elected to Congress, and after serving one term in the House, in which he always cast his vote with the Whigs or the Wilmot Democrats, he returned to his law practice at Springfield. He had almost lost interest in politics, as he said, until the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Law. This roused him as nothing had done before, and within a few years he was the acknowledged leader of his party in Illinois. Few outside of his state knew the latent power of Lincoln,

⁴⁴ See Burgess's "Civil War and the Constitution," Vol. I, p. 6.

but Douglas knew him well, and when he heard that Lincoln was to be his opponent in the senatorial race, he said: "I shall have my hands full. He is the strong man of his party—full of wit, facts, dates, and . . . the best stump speaker in the West; he is as honest as he is shrewd."⁴⁸

The principals who were about to engage in this intellectual duel had much in common. Each had been born in poverty in another state; each had made the broad-prairied West his permanent home, and had begun his career without money, friends, or influence. They had served together in the Illinois legislature, had eaten at the same table, had attended the same horse races, and had loved the same maiden. For many years they had been personal, but never political friends. Both were courteous, honest, fearless, jovial, and companionable. Both were sanguine and keenly ambitious to rise in public life, and each had the rare quality of winning a large circle of followers. But the contrast was still more notable.

Douglas was below the average stature of men; Lincoln was above it. Douglas was compactly built, graceful, and polished in manners; Lincoln was the opposite of all these. Douglas had a deep, musical voice, and could hold an audience unwearied for hours; but his logic was faulty, and his conclusions often superficial. Lincoln's voice was high-pitched and rather unpleasant, but his form of speech was so terse, epigrammatic, and logical, that even his great opponent, with all his powers of casuistry, could not escape its force. Douglas had reached the zenith of his power, and for four years past had held his lofty position amid adverse political winds only by his marvelous courage and audacity;

⁴⁸ Forney, Vol. III, p. 179.

Lincoln was just emerging from obscurity, and was soon to become the leading American of his time.

These two giants were to stand together on the same platform in seven different Illinois towns and address the same audiences on the great questions of the day. And it is a curious fact that Lincoln then attracted national attention only because of his connection with the world-famous Douglas, while in our own day Douglas is remembered in history more for his connection with Lincoln than for any other event of his life.

The campaign opened in June, when the Republican convention nominated Lincoln at Springfield. The address to the delegates by their candidate was masterful; but it was radical. In it he used the famous expression, "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. . . . It will become all one thing or all the other." No prominent Republican had advanced such radical doctrine before. Seward's famous "irrepressible conflict" was not uttered for some months after this. Lincoln's friends urged that he omit this part of the speech, but he declared that he would rather be defeated with that statement in his speech than win the election without it. He further stated in answer to the eastern Republicans who desired to see Douglas returned to the Senate: "They remind us that he is a great man and that the largest of us are very small ones. Let this be granted. . . . How can he oppose the advance of slavery? He does not care anything about it. . . . Our cause must be intrusted to its own undoubted friends . . . who do care for the results. . . . Clearly he [Douglas] is not with us—he does not pretend to be—he does not promise ever to be."

Soon after the campaign had opened, Lincoln, through his managers, challenged Douglas to a joint stumping tour, a series of joint debates. It was a daring thing to do. Douglas was reputed to be the ablest orator in the nation. He had no rival in the United States Senate. He had measured arms with Seward, Chase, Corwin, and Sumner, and had surpassed them all. The eyes of the country were now turned toward the prairie state. The two rivals met in various towns.⁴⁶ The crowds, composed of both parties, were too great for the public halls, and they met in open groves. There was but one great, vital subject to be discussed,—slavery in the territories. The speakers were courteous to each other, but merciless in their political arguments. Lincoln's disadvantage, especially at first, was in the opposition of the leaders of his party; but Douglas's disadvantage was still greater in the opposition of the Buchanan administration, for after the Lecompton struggle he and the President had never become reconciled.

The chief feature of this remarkable debate was the questions publicly asked by each speaker of the other. Douglas began this, and by so doing he set a trap for himself from which it was impossible to escape. Lincoln's fatal question was this: "Can the people of a United States territory, in any lawful way . . . exclude slavery from its limits, prior to the formation of a state constitution?" The deep significance of this question is seen only by remembering that it involved the irreconcilable difference between the Democrats of the North and those of the South in their interpretation of the Kansas-Nebraska Law. This question placed Douglas in the most trying position in his life. He was an aspirant for the presidency; he knew that his audi-

⁴⁶ These debates began August 24 and ended October 15.

ence in these debates included the whole United States, and to answer this question on which his party was divided would, as he well knew, offend one section or the other; and yet to refuse to answer would be childish and cowardly. Six days elapsed between the propounding of this question and the next meeting, to be held at Freeport. Meantime Lincoln's friends begged him to withdraw it, as they claimed Douglas was sure to answer in accordance with the feeling at the North, and, if so, he would win the senatorship. "I am after larger game," answered Lincoln; "if Douglas answers as you say he will, he can never be President, and the battle of 1860 is worth a hundred of this." "

Douglas answered in accordance with the northern view. This opinion became known as the "Freeport doctrine." It was discussed by all the leading newspapers of the United States. By many the author was scored without mercy, and most of all by Lincoln, who showed with unanswerable logic how inconsistent with this view was the Dred Scott decision, which Douglas professed to accept as sound Democratic doctrine.

Douglas won the senatorship, though Lincoln had a majority of the popular vote. The result was due to the fact that of the twelve hold-over senators, eight were Democrats.

Douglas was the apparent winner in this great contest, though in the light of subsequent events the world must render a different verdict. This campaign proved a turning point in the fortunes of both contestants, but, like Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker, their fortunes moved in opposite directions. Lincoln soon became the foremost man of his age. Douglas never again stood on the pinnacle he

"The truth of this incident has been questioned by some writers; but it is given by Hernden, Lincoln's law partner, and is probably true.

had occupied before. His Freeport doctrine had mortally offended the South. His Lecompton revolt was a venial offense compared with this;⁴⁸ and two years later the South refused to accept him as their candidate, the Democratic party was severed in twain, and the Republicans carried the election.

JOHN BROWN AND HARPERS FERRY

On the morning of October 17, 1859, the country was startled by the news flashed over the wires that the United States arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, had been seized the night before by a band of Abolitionists and negroes, and that the slaves of Virginia were rising against their masters. In the North the news created intense excitement; in the South it created rage and terror, for in that section the belief quickly took possession of the public mind that a great northern conspiracy had been set afoot with the object of exciting slave insurrections throughout the South. There is little wonder that such a belief awakened intense feeling at the South, for a widespread slave uprising would have been a calamity of the most awful consequences; it would have subjected the women and children to nameless horrors and would have destroyed the very foundations of society.

But the report proved exaggerated. The arsenal at Harpers Ferry, an insignificant village at the point where the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers join their waters and break through their mountain barriers, had been seized. But there was no uprising of slaves, nor was the number of men engaged in the insurrection by any means so great as was at first reported. In fact, there were but nineteen, and these, led by an elderly man with a long flowing white beard and

⁴⁸ Nicolay and Hay, Vol. II, p. 163.

with a strange, unfathomable eye, had stealthily entered the town by night, extinguished the lights, cut the telegraph wires, made prisoners of the guards, and taken possession of the armory. Soon after daybreak the people of the neighborhood began to rise against the invaders, and a desultory fire was kept up during the forenoon, a few being killed on either side. Soon after noon a hundred militia arrived from Charlestown, and others poured in rapidly. Thousands of shots were exchanged during the day. In the evening Colonel Robert E. Lee arrived with a body of marines, but he made no attack until the following morning. He then sent his aid, J. E. B. Stuart, who had been in Kansas, and who was to become the famous Confederate cavalry leader, to demand a surrender. Stuart, on seeing the aged leader, exclaimed, "Why, aren't you old Pottawatomie Brown of Kansas?"⁴⁰ And thus it first became known to the public that the leader of this extraordinary movement was John Brown.

John Brown was a descendant of one of the Pilgrims who had come in the *Mayflower* in 1620. During the War of 1812 his father had been engaged in furnishing cattle for the American armies. John usually accompanied him as a cattle driver, and in this capacity he witnessed the surrender of Hull at Detroit. It was about this time that he became a rabid abolitionist. He was staying, for a time, with a slaveholder who owned a negro boy about Brown's age and apparently his equal in every way, and while he, Brown, was treated with the utmost kindness, the black boy was beaten and maltreated for little or no cause. This incident fixed in the youthful soul of John Brown a hatred of slavery that increased in intensity to the end of his life.

⁴⁰ See *Century Magazine*, June, 1885.

Many years later, when the father of a growing family, he, in imitation of the ancient Carthaginian commander, had his sons take a solemn oath that they would join with him in devoting their lives to making relentless war on slavery.

The stormy career of John Brown in Kansas we have noticed. This he closed by making a wild raid, with a few followers, into Missouri, and capturing a dozen slaves, whom he escorted to Canada. In the spring of 1859 we find him again in New England plotting his last and most famous exploit. His intention was to lead a band of men into the Virginia mountains, to call upon the slaves to flock to his retreat, to arm them against recapture, and to extend his operations over the entire South. In short, his plan was to lead the slaves to freedom through a general, violent uprising.

Late in the summer of 1859 Brown rented a house a few miles from Harpers Ferry, where, under the name of I. Smith and Sons, he received boxes of arms and ammunition. Everything was done with great secrecy. No one suspected that this gray-haired stranger and his numerous sons had other designs than to purchase a farm, as they pretended, and to become stock raisers. After some weeks of preparation they threw the whole country into a state of consternation, as we have seen, by their night attack on Harpers Ferry. Of Brown's followers, three were his own sons and five were colored men. Most of them did not know of his intention to seize the arsenal till near the time of making the raid. They then attempted to dissuade him, urging that the undertaking would be most dangerous. But his iron will was unmoved; he quietly answered, "If we lose our lives, it will perhaps do more for the cause than our lives

could be worth in any other way." " He ordered his men not to take life, if they could possibly avoid it, and not a shot was fired until they had been in possession of the arsenal for three hours.

At any time during the forenoon of the 17th Brown might have escaped to the mountains, as he had intended to do after supplying his party at the arsenal with a stock of arms for his expected recruits; but this he failed to do until it was too late. Six of his men, including one of his sons, were out scouring the country for slaves, and these for the time escaped.⁵¹ His other two sons were killed. But few of the little band remained alive when at length the besiegers broke into the engine-house and took them captive. Brown himself was severely wounded by a bayonet thrust.

Brown's composure throughout the siege was a matter of astonishment to those who witnessed it. With one son dead at his side and another mortally wounded, he felt the pulse of his dying son with one hand and held his rifle in the other while he commanded his men with the utmost composure.⁵² Brown was duly arraigned for treason and murder, was given a fair trial in the Virginia court at Charlestown, and was sentenced to be hanged. He spent the period between the time of receiving his sentence and the execution in the utmost serenity of mind, never exhibiting the slightest fear or regret except for the loss of life that he had occasioned. To a friend he wrote, "It is a great comfort to feel assured that I am permitted to die for a cause"; to his

⁵¹ Sanborn's "Life and Letters of John Brown," p. 542.

⁵² Most of these were captured and put to death; but Owen Brown, son of the leader, was never taken, and he lived for many years afterward in New York.

⁵³ Sanborn, p. 572.

wife, "My mind is very tranquil, I may say joyous;" to his children, "I feel just as content to die for God's eternal truth on the scaffold as any other way." On the day of execution he walked out of the jail "with a radiant countenance and the step of a conqueror," said an eyewitness. He mounted a wagon and sat upon his coffin to the place of execution, and without a tremor or a sign of fear he stepped upon the gallows and was swung into eternity. Governor Wise, fearing an attempt to rescue Brown, had called out several thousand troops and had planted cannon around the place of execution; but no such attempt was made, and Virginia, which had been wrought into a high state of excitement, breathed freer when old John Brown was dead.

It is even at this day too early to make a final historic estimate of John Brown. Throughout the South he was denounced as the blackest of villains, while many at the North pronounced him a saint and a martyr. Emerson was led to say that Brown's death made the gallows glorious like the cross. Victor Hugo pronounced Brown an apostle and a hero. The general sentiment at the North, however, condemned the deed of Brown, while the greatest sympathy with the doer was expressed on every side. Brown was a man of intense religious convictions; but he drew his inspirations from the Old Testament rather than from the New; his models were Joshua, Gideon, and Jephthah.⁸⁸ He brooded over the condition of the black man until his judgment became warped and distorted. He was utterly impractical. No man with robust common sense, with well-balanced mental powers, would have regarded his attack on the United States arsenal as other than suicidal folly. And yet we must pity rather than blame John Brown. By the

⁸⁸ Rhodes, Vol. II, p. 161.

technical letter of the law he was a criminal; by the motives and intents of his heart he was not. His supreme self-command, his heroic courage, his readiness to sacrifice his home, his family, his life, for a cause, must elicit our admiration. But we cannot place him among the saints, or the great heroes of history; he was an honest, but sadly misguided fanatic; on this one subject he was probably insane.

No great political effect of Brown's raid was felt. Congress met soon after the execution, and great efforts were made to saddle the whole affair on the Republican party. It was found that Brown had been furnished with money by a few northern friends headed by Gerrit Smith, the wealthy New York philanthropist; but the most searching inquiry by a Senate committee failed to prove that the great Republican leaders, Seward, Greeley, Lincoln, and Chase, had anything whatever to do with Brown's movements, or any knowledge of the raid till after it had been made. Brown's raid, however, had some effect in consolidating the South against the North.⁵⁴ A son of Governor Wise has recently written that the attitude of the North surprised the South and did more to open its eyes to the gulf between the sections than anything else. The great majority of southern voters were non-slaveholding poor whites. Vast numbers of these would probably have cast their lot for the Union in 1861, but for their fear of a slave insurrection. The southern leaders rung many changes on the Brown raid to show that such an insurrection was possible and that the North was capable of encouraging it. This doubtless had much to do with unifying the South under the banner of the slaveholders at the outbreak of the war.

⁵⁴ See Burgess's "Civil War and the Constitution," Vol. I, p. 43.

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1860

Scarcely had the country recovered from the excitement of John Brown's raid, when it was called to face another presidential election—the most momentous of all since the overthrow of the Federalists in 1800. Great changes in the political world had been going on for several years. The Kansas-Nebraska bill, the Dred Scott decision, and the troubles in Kansas had shaken Democratic power to its foundations. The Republican party was irresistibly fastening its hold upon the North. Thousands of Democrats who had adhered to the party of their fathers with all its faults could now endure it no longer, after the ignoble attempt of their President to force the Lecompton fraud upon Kansas; and they were warmly welcomed into the Republican fold. Nevertheless, the Democrats would doubtless have again elected their President but for the fatal split within their own ranks. Early in February, Jefferson Davis of Mississippi introduced in the Senate a series of resolutions which were intended to set forth the Democratic doctrine of the South, and which were meant as an ultimatum to the northern wing of the party. In these he set forth the extreme doctrine of Calhoun that the states were sovereign, that the general government was subordinate, and that neither Congress nor the territorial legislatures had the power to prohibit, but the government must protect, slavery in the territories. These resolutions were debated for many weeks, but ere they came to a vote the Democratic party had met in national convention at Charleston, South Carolina.

The Charleston convention was inharmonious. The spirit of discord that had so long distracted the country now threatened the one last great bond between the North and the South—the Democratic party. Many looked with awe

upon the gathering storm, when they realized what its meaning might be to the Federal Union. For long years the North and the South had been growing farther and farther apart. The Whig party had destroyed itself in attempting to cater to both sections; the religious bonds, the industrial and social bonds between them had for the most part been severed. Nothing was left to hold the North and the South together peacefully except this great political party whose representatives were now gathering at Charleston; and this bond was about to be broken.

Douglas was again the Democratic idol of the North. But he had re-won his northern laurels only by sacrificing his popularity in the South; and while he was now the first and only choice of the northern wing of the party, the South refused to accept him. But it was the platform, and not the candidate, on which the convention divided. The committee that framed the platform was composed of one delegate from each state. There were eighteen free states and fifteen slave states; but as the delegates of two free states, California and Oregon, voted steadily with the South, that section had a majority in the committee. The committee, therefore, adopted a platform, based on the Davis resolutions in the Senate, embodying the extreme southern doctrine on the subject of slavery in the territories; namely, that no power could exclude it, that Congress must protect it. The northern delegates could not accept this doctrine without sacrificing the vote of every northern state in the election. In vain they pleaded with their southern brethren to yield and save the party from disruption; the southern delegates were inflexible. Douglas meantime declared that he would refuse to be a candidate on such a platform. But the convention was not obliged to accept this platform dictated by the

committee. The South had a majority in the committee, but not in the convention; and now, for the first time in the history of Democratic national conventions, the northern delegates made a determined stand, refused the dictation of the South, cast aside its proffered platform, and adopted another, brought in by a minority of the committee. By this platform as adopted the status of slavery in the territories was to be determined by the courts.

The next act in the great drama immediately followed. The Alabama delegates rose and seceded from the convention, and they were followed by those from Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina, Florida, and Arkansas. The remainder of the convention then began balloting for a candidate, and after fifty-seven fruitless ballots the convention adjourned to meet on June 18 at Baltimore, while the seceding faction decided to meet at Richmond, Virginia.

The adjourned convention met at the appointed time and place. Every reason now existed for a reunion of the factions. The Republicans had met in the meantime, and had placed their candidates in the field; and every index pointed to a Republican victory unless the Democrats would unite. But this was impossible. The North could not, and the South would not, yield. Had the North yielded the point at issue, the Democratic party north of Mason and Dixon's line would have been destroyed. The northern delegates held their ground, and in consequence most of the delegates from the South who had not withdrawn at Charleston now did so, and they met in another hall. The convention then nominated Douglas for President and Herschel V. Johnson of Georgia for Vice President. The seceding faction, joined by their brethren from Richmond, nominated John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky for President and



1821—JOHN CABELL BRECKENRIDGE—1875.

From an enlargement of an original Brady negative in the War Department, Washington, D.C.

Joseph Lane of Oregon for Vice President, and the severance of the Democratic party was complete. Thus the great political party that had been founded by Jefferson, that had governed the country for half a century, had successfully carried on two foreign wars, and had acquired Florida and every foot of our public domain beyond the Mississippi,—this great party had at last quarreled with itself and invited its own destruction.

The Republican convention met in the fast growing city of Chicago on the 16th of May. The convention was rendered an object of intense interest by the fatal disagreement at Charleston; for the belief was widespread that here would be named the next President of the United States. The great "wigwam," seating twelve thousand people, was built for the purpose, but this could accommodate only a fraction of the gathering clans that poured into the city from all points of the compass. The convention gave little evidence of being the exponent of a new-born party founded on a great moral principle; it was less orderly and seemed much less serious than the one that had met at Charleston. The streets of the city were filled with noisy multitudes shouting for this or that candidate. No longer did the leaders of the party hold aloof, as four years before at Philadelphia, when they willingly let the prize go to a romantic adventurer of the West. Now the best men of the party stood ready and eager to receive the honors of the convention.

The acknowledged leader of the party was William H. Seward of New York. His claims were strong. He was the chief originator of Republican doctrine, and for years before the party was born he had stood in the forefront in battling against the encroachments of the slave power.

It was composed of the old line Whigs and others who could find no political resting place with the extremes represented by Lincoln and Breckenridge, nor on the middle ground occupied by Douglas. It called itself the Constitutional Union party, adopted the terse platform "The Constitution, the Union, and the enforcement of the laws," which, in the apt words of Horace Greeley, meant anything in general and nothing in particular, and nominated John Bell of Tennessee for President and Edward Everett of Massachusetts for Vice President. Thousands of citizens voted with this party simply because they could not decide which side they were on.

The campaign was less boisterous than many of its predecessors. Issues rather than men were discussed—or rather, one issue, the same that had been before the country for several years—slavery in the territories. Outside of Pennsylvania, where the tariff received a large share of attention, this great subject absorbed the public mind. The issue was squarely drawn between the Lincoln and Breckenridge extremes. The Republicans took the positive ground that, as slavery was a moral and political evil, it should be permitted to spread no farther, and that Congress should prohibit it in the territories. The Breckenridge Democrats took the equally positive ground that, as slaves are constitutional property, their possession in the territories must be protected by Congress. The Douglas Democrats took the middle ground that Congress must keep its hands off, and that the people of a territory must decide for themselves whether slavery should exist among them. If the Douglas party should win, the great subject would simply be left unsettled; if Lincoln or Breckenridge should carry the election, the issue would be squarely



1791—JAMES BUCHANAN—1868.

BY GEORGE PETER ALEXANDER HEALY, 1859.

From the original portrait in the Corcoran Art Gallery, Washington, D.C.

joined and the defeated party must yield to the majority, or resist by violence. Threats of dissolving the Union, in case of Lincoln's election, were made freely in the South; but in the North it was not generally believed that such a step would be taken. Had the North fully realized the gravity of the situation, the election of Lincoln would have been doubtful; for the people, a great many of them, whatever their hatred of slavery, dreaded still more a dissolution of the Union or civil war. Douglas made a noble fight. He spoke in many states; but with all his tireless energy and eloquence, the tide against him was too great to be overcome. Nor could Breckenridge hope to carry a northern state, and, as all the southern electors were not enough to make a choice, his election was impossible. Bell could not dream of carrying more than a few states. This left Lincoln as the only candidate whose election was possible, and in case of his failure the election would go to the House. But the House was hopelessly divided, no party controlling a majority of the states.

The Republicans, however, felt confident. If the Democrats had united at any time during the summer or early autumn, with Douglas as their candidate, they might possibly have carried the election; but not after the October elections in a few of the Northern states. When Pennsylvania voted in October and was carried by the Lincoln party, electing Andrew Curtin governor by thirty-two thousand majority, the last hope of successful opposition was crushed. Nothing under heaven could now prevent the election of Lincoln. This fact almost pleased the extreme South. The slaveholders preferred the election of Lincoln to that of Douglas; for if Douglas were elected, the great question would remain unsettled; if Lincoln were successful,

President of Nicaragua. Soon after he had succeeded in usurping the power, he issued a decree reëstablishing slavery in the country, where it had not existed for many years. This revealed the true object of his expedition—to secure Central America for slavery, and eventually to add those states to our Union in the interests of the slaveholders. After he had held the country for two years, a coalition against him drove him out. Twice afterward he made attempts to regain his hold on Nicaragua; but on the last of these trips he was overpowered, captured, tried by court martial, condemned, and shot to death.

CHAPTER XXIX

AN ANTE-BELLUM VIEW

A HURRIED view of the great people that were now about to engage in the bloodiest of all civil wars in the annals of history will here be appropriate. Soon after the second war with England the people of the United States began to feel a consciousness of national greatness and power as never before, and the marvelous development of the country in the half century that followed gave evidence that this national pride rested on a sound basis. Within that period the population was greatly increased;⁵⁶ the nation took its place among the greatest of manufacturing and commercial peoples; in literature, education, and invention it more than kept pace with the world's advancing civilization. A few of these developments may be described under separate heads, beginning with

INVENTIONS AND DISCOVERIES

No other country ever gave to the world in the same length of time such a series of useful inventions as did the United States in the thirty years ending with 1860. First among them in importance is perhaps the electric telegraph, the patent for which was granted to Samuel F. B. Morse in 1837, though twenty years passed before it came into very general use. In 1858 the first Atlantic cable was laid

⁵⁶ For population at each census see chronology in Vol. I.

East, but the rising West as yet had few railroad advantages. Before 1860, however, several great trunk lines extended from the eastern seaboard to the valley of the Mississippi, the increase in mileage within the ten years being five-fold—from six thousand to thirty thousand miles. But railways had reached no such degree of perfection as in our own day, and accidents with fatal results were very common. The same was true in a still greater degree of steamboats. The loss of life from these two sources was so great as to raise a loud protest from the people and the press. Congress passed a law in 1852 (still on our statute books) to regulate steamboat travel. It provided for the careful inspection of steamers, for small boats and life-preservers to be carried on each, and made the owners responsible for accidents arising from a neglect of the provisions of this law.

In the cities great changes had taken place since the first quarter of the century had closed. The principal streets were now paved with stone and lighted with gas. Fire engines took the place of the old hand bucket about the middle of the century. Omnibuses and horse-car lines were introduced back in the thirties; and waterworks, one of the greatest of city improvements, came into general use at about the same time. The attractions of city life had its effect on the population; the percentage of the people who lived in the cities was now far greater than it had been in earlier times.

The material prosperity of the country during the decade ending with the panic of 1857 was amazing. Manufactories were multiplied on every hand, and our commerce whitened every sea. Webster wrote in 1850 that "our foreign commerce was hardly exceeded by the oldest and

CHARLESTON MERCURY EXTRA:

*Passed unanimously at 1.15 o'clock, P. M., December
20th, 1860.*

AN ORDINANCE

*To dissolve the Union between the State of South Carolina and
other States united with her under the compact entitled "The
Constitution of the United States of America."*

*We, the People of the State of South Carolina, in Convention assembled, do declare and ordain, and
it is hereby declared and ordained,*

That the Ordinance adopted by us in Convention, on the twenty-third day of May, in the
year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-eight, whereby the Constitution of the
United States of America was ratified, and also, all Acts and parts of Acts of the General
Assembly of this State, ratifying amendments of the said Constitution, are hereby repealed;
and that the union now subsisting between South Carolina and other States, under the name of
"The United States of America," is hereby dissolved.

THE
UNION
IS
DISSOLVED!

From an original broadside in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

most commercial nations." The *New York Herald* stated in 1853 that in "both sailing and steam vessels we have surpassed the whole world." James Buchanan declared in 1854 that "our mercantile marine is the largest in the world."⁵⁹ It is greatly to be regretted that all this was changed by the shock of civil war, and that, owing to our narrow navigation laws, we have never regained our prestige on the sea.

EDUCATION AND RELIGION

All the states had established free-school systems by 1860. In the Western states a certain portion of the public lands was set apart for school purposes, and as this grew in value the education fund was greatly swelled. The rural schools were usually ungraded, as many of them are to this day, but the rudiments of an education were within reach of all classes. It has been noted by foreigners that no armies ever before went forth to battle composed of men so universally intelligent as those of the Civil War.⁶⁰ The colleges were also growing and multiplying, but their efficiency by no means approached that of the present day.

The religious growth of the country had been quite equal to its material growth. The intolerant spirit and bigotry of the early colonial days had almost wholly disappeared, and the great church bodies worked in friendly rivalry; but religion had not lost its hold on the masses. The part played by the various churches in reform movements, in education, and in fostering our modern civilization is incalculable. Before 1860 the leading Protestant bodies—

⁵⁹ See Rhodes, Vol. III, p. 8.

⁶⁰ See Goldwin Smith's "United States."

Baptist, Congregationalist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, Reformed, and Presbyterian—had become powerful organizations, each was vigorously engaged planting missions and building churches in the new settlements, in founding schools and colleges in the older states; and each had begun to send missionaries into foreign fields. The Roman Catholics had also made commendable progress. Many of the foreign immigrants were of this faith, and the Church put forth great efforts to supply for them schools and churches in the various parts of the country where they settled.

One of the strangest of American religious phenomena is the rise of the Mormons. As early as 1820 Joseph Smith of New York, a native of Vermont, began to have visions and to dream dreams. In 1827 he professed to have found some golden tablets, revealed to him by an angel, the inscriptions of which he published in 1830 as a new revelation from heaven. He called it "The Book of Mormon," or "The Golden Bible." This book had been copied, as the weight of evidence clearly indicates, from a manuscript in a Pittsburg printing office by an employee of the office named Rigdon, who was now in league with Smith. It had been written by Solomon Spalding of Conneaut, Ohio, and was a fanciful history of the ancient inhabitants of America, who were said to be descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel.⁶¹ On the publication of "The Book of Mormon," Smith had his "Three Witnesses," who solemnly declared that an angel had revealed to them also that the new religion now preached by Smith was the true and only religion; but these men afterward quarreled with Smith and declared that their testimony was false and the whole scheme a fraud.

⁶¹ See Linn's "Story of the Mormons," Chap. VII.



1805 — JOSEPH SMITH — 1844.

BY WILLIAM MAJOR, 1844.

From the original portrait in possession of Joseph Smith, Lamoni, Ia.

But Smith continued to preach his new religion, and soon had a few converts. He professed to receive new revelations from time to time. In one of these he was directed to move with his followers to Kirtland, Ohio, which he did. Here they remained for some years, when they removed to Independence, Missouri; but so undesirable were they that the other residents drove them from the state, and they settled in Illinois and built the city of Nauvoo. The converts now numbered several thousand, and Smith was autocrat. In 1843 Smith declared that he had received a new revelation making it lawful for a man to have more than one wife. This was the origin of polygamy among the Mormons, or "Latter-day Saints."

The people of Illinois soon grew tired of the Mormons. Smith came into conflict with the authorities and was lodged in jail, where, in 1844, he was set upon by a mob and shot to death. Brigham Young, one of the "twelve apostles," now became the leader, and in 1847 the whole body of Mormons moved across the western plains to Great Salt Lake and built Salt Lake City. They called the place Desert, but the United States government organized it into a territory under the name of Utah. In 1857 the Mormons rebelled against the United States authority. Troops were sent to Utah, and they soon put down all opposition, after which a "Gentile" governor was appointed to succeed Brigham Young, who had been governor. The Mormons have made many converts among certain classes, and their Church has shown an unexpected growth in the Rocky Mountain region. The whole number of Mormons in the world at this time is estimated at about three hundred thousand, probably ninety-five per cent of whom are in the United States.

equal to those of the North, but home seekers found little to attract them where slave labor was supreme and where their social standing would not be above that of the poor whites. Furthermore, the slaveholders did not encourage free men to settle among them, for they well knew that every increment to the free labor in their section would tend to weaken the institution of slavery.



1812—ALEXANDER HAMILTON STEPHENS—1883.

From an original Brady negative in possession of L. C. Handy, Washington, D.C.

CHAPTER XXX

DRIFTING TOWARD HOSTILITIES

CAUSES AND PRELIMINARIES

MANY causes have been given by various writers as bringing about the Civil War; but after all there was only one cause—slavery. Let us go back for a hurried glance at the great events of forty years that pointed toward war. It is true that there were muttered rumblings, arising from the slave question, since the founding of the government, but there was no general aligning of the North and the South on opposite sides until the great agitation of 1820 that resulted in the Missouri Compromise. This compromise, though it doubtless aided in keeping slavery out of the Northwest, was an immediate victory for the South.

Then came the Texas question. The South longed for Texas. The North objected, but only feebly, and Texas came in as a slave state. Hard on this came the Mexican War. Its object we have noticed in a former chapter—more slave territory. Another victory for the slaveholder? Not exactly; for it happened that the people and not the politicians had it to decide whether California should be a slave or a free state, and they decided for freedom. Next followed the Compromise of 1850, and this was a victory for the South; for the one feature objectionable to the slaveholder—the admission of free California—had already been

decided by the people and was therefore not a part of the compromise, and the other feature to attract the chief attention—the Fugitive Slave Law—was forced by the slaveholder upon the North.

Four years then passed, when the slaveholder scored his greatest victory thus far in the Kansas-Nebraska bill, repealing the Missouri Compromise. By this he received back what he had paid for Missouri. This might have troubled his conscience a little—for he still kept Missouri—until the highest tribunal in the land decided, through the *Dred Scott* case, that the slaveholder had been too good to his opponents in granting the Missouri Compromise line, that he had exceeded his powers, like a son bartering away an entailed estate, which he had no power to sell—in other words, that the bargain had been null and void all along. This was hardly fair to the North, for the slaveholder had eaten his cake,—he had settled Missouri with slaves,—and yet he took back the price he had paid for the privilege.

This ended the victories of the slaveholder. He made one more terrific struggle—for Kansas—but he lost. Why? Because, as in California, the people had the matter to settle. It is a very notable fact that in all these minor struggles antedating the war the South won in each case, except in those of California and Kansas; and in these two only had the people an opportunity to decide. All the others were decided by the ruling class, so-called.

From these facts we reach the twofold conclusion: first, that the slaveholder dominated the government for many years before the war; second, that the people in general were not in sympathy with him. If then the people, the source of all power, did not approve the slaveholder's rule, why did they not take matters into their own hands, as

they had the right and the power to do?" It may be answered that they did this eventually. First they defeated the Democratic party for waging the Mexican War; then they slew the Whig party for the compromise measures. But such mild treatment was ineffective in dealing with such a powerful, audacious, determined oligarchy as the slave power of the South. Seeing that heroic measures were necessary, the people therefore founded a new political party, based it on the non-extension of slavery, and elected their President.* This was a notice that the extension of slavery must cease; and this the slaveholder could not endure—hence came the war.

The cause of the war was slavery, and slavery alone. Some say that the war arose from the different interpretations of the Constitution on the question of state sovereignty, mis-called state rights. But what caused this difference of interpretations? Slavery. State sovereignty was but a weapon, the most convenient and effective, with which the slaveholder battled for his favorite institution. Why should he wish to destroy the Union which his fathers had helped to form? Why should he be less loyal than the New England manufacturer, the Pennsylvania miner, or the Ohio farmer? It was not so at the beginning of the century; it is not so to-day, since the apple of discord has been removed. For sixty years no state or statesman had threat-

*One cause of the people's tardiness was their indifference. It required many years for the North to learn that the Union could not continue half slave and half free.

*It is true that fewer than half the people voted for Lincoln; many were too timid to vote their convictions, others could not break away from the historic party of their fathers; but it is certain that by 1860 a large majority of the people of the country opposed the further extension of slavery.

ened the Union through state rights *per se*. In every case, when so used, it was some grievance that led to the use of state rights as the handiest effective weapon.⁶⁵ When Jefferson abandoned his extreme state rights views for a stronger union, the status of that doctrine would have been settled except on account of other grievances for which it was made a mask. But for slavery state rights would have adjusted itself; and this it was doing, for it was less prominent in 1840 than at the beginning of the century. State rights in the abstract had nothing to do with bringing on the war.

Others say that secession caused the war. Very true; but what caused secession? Slavery. Still others will say that the election of Lincoln brought about secession and war. But why was Lincoln objectionable to the South, except on account of his views and the attitude of his party on slavery? The Kansas-Nebraska Law, the Dred Scott decision, the border strife in Kansas—each played its part in hastening the war, but they were all slavery questions. In short, all the various causes that converged to bring about the dreadful conflict may be summed up into one sweeping cause of causes—slavery.

In a remoter sense, however, climatic and economic con-

⁶⁵ New England had a quarrel with the government during the War of 1812, and appealed to state sovereignty; Pennsylvania had a similar experience in 1808, Ohio in 1820, South Carolina in 1832. As Alexander Johnson truly says: "*Almost every state in the Union in turn declared its own sovereignty, and denounced as almost treasonable, similar declarations in other cases by other states.*" But the doctrine was given up in other sections while it was retained in the South because of the peculiar institution. Thus at the South the generation preceding the war was thoroughly indoctrinated with state rights, and it was this that led such men as Robert E. Lee to side with the South. But this condition was brought about wholly by slavery.

ditions, which rendered slave labor remunerative at the South and not at the North, may be said to have caused the war; but these conditions would have brought no war without slavery. The Northern states emancipated soon after the Revolution, not that the people were more righteous than those of the South, for they were not, but because slavery had not taken such a hold on the North. Slavery in the one section and not in the other brought about a growing difference in social, economic, and political conditions, and the two sections drifted apart for many years. The statement that the causes of the war were "numerous and varied" ¹⁰ is misleading if unexplained, for every cause had its root in slavery. It is morally certain that there would have been no war but for slavery—unless it must be admitted that no people are capable of adjusting in right proportion the relations of the great opposing tendencies, Nationality and Democracy, without bloodshed.

The slaveholder was remarkably shrewd, but he made blunders. One was his forcing the Fugitive Slave Law upon the northern conscience. This led the northerner to see slavery in its ugliest form. The pleasant relations between the master and slave he did not see; he saw only the fleeing black man and heard his tale of woe; again, he saw the fugitive seized and dragged back to the land of bondage. Such scenes awakened in the people of the North a moral resentment against slavery as nothing else could have done.

The most serious blunder of the slaveholder was his forcing the war by an attempt to break up the Union. This was a daring leap, and it proved to be a fatal blunder. He had been protected by the Constitution and by his influence over the northern politicians; now he shattered the Con-

¹⁰ Macy's "Political Parties," p. 117.

stitution and alienated his northern friends; he appealed his case from the lower court, the Constitution and the government, to the higher tribunal, the people. Had he not learned by the fate of California and Kansas, by the rough handling of the Whig party and of the Kansas-Nebraska Democrats, that the people were not with him? The slaveholder knew that the North was immeasurably stronger than the South; he certainly knew that in an exhausting war, a fight to the finish, between the Union and the slave power, both could not survive. Did he underestimate the Union sentiment, the love for the old flag at the North? Did he expect to be permitted to depart in peace? Or did he rely on foreign recognition and aid? The slaveholder was admirably brave and daring, but in some ways he miscalculated, and he made a fatal blunder in permitting his cause to be appealed to the sword.⁶⁷

SECESSION

The news that Abraham Lincoln had been elected to the presidency, though not unexpected, fell like a pall upon many parts of the South. Many of the radicals, it is true, professed to rejoice at the result; for now, they claimed, they had sufficient cause for secession; but with the great majority the feeling was one of awe and of evil forebodings. The threat to secede from the Union was as old as the century; it had been indulged in by many states North and South, and it usually awakened little fear. But in this case the South was in deep, deadly earnest. The ground on which the South based its right to secede was that the Union was a confederation of sovereign states, each

⁶⁷ The line of discussion in this section is similar to that of Chapter IV of my "Side Lights," Series II.

of which had the legal power to withdraw from the compact at pleasure. The pretext for secession at that time was, as shown by the "declaration of causes" issued by South Carolina, that thirteen of the northern states had passed "personal-liberty laws" in violation of the Constitution, that the antislavery agitation of the North had rendered property in slaves insecure, and that a man whose "opinions and purposes were hostile to slavery" had been elected President of the United States. It was also claimed that the South had been taxed by high tariff duties for the benefit of northern interests.

South Carolina took the first step toward dismembering the Union. Even before the election Governor Gist of that state sent a circular letter to the governors of the other cotton states inquiring if they were ready to take the decisive step in case of Lincoln's success. From most of them the answer was rather discouraging. North Carolina and Louisiana were unwilling; Alabama and Georgia hesitated; Florida alone gave a hearty affirmative response. But the impetuous South Carolina would wait for none of them. Her legislature met on November 5 to choose presidential electors, for in this state alone the electors were still chosen by the legislature, and not by the people. This was the opportunity. The legislature remained in session till the news of Lincoln's election had caused a whirlwind of disunion enthusiasm to sweep over the state. Now was the time to strike, for a few weeks of reflection might cool the ardor of the people. The legislature lost no time in calling for the election of a secession convention. This election was held on December 6, and the convention met on the 17th.

The short campaign was marked by the wildest enthu-

siasm. Without party divisions the best men of the state were chosen; five had been governors of the state, and many had served in Congress. By the time this convention met the people had been wrought up to fever heat. "The excitement of the people is great under the sense of deep wrongs," wrote the newly elected governor. There can be no doubt of their sincerity. They honestly believed that the continued agitation of the North against slavery threatened the peace and happiness of their homes, and would, if continued, render life unendurable at the South. For many years they had been taught to love their state above the Union, and now it was easy for them to decide on the one remedy for their wrongs, as they believed,—secession.

The demeanor of the delegates was grave. They seemed to feel a deep sense of their responsibility. Their "Declaration of Independence" was solemnly read to the assembly. The ordinance of secession repealed the act of 1788, by which the state had adopted the Constitution, and pronounced the union between South Carolina and the United States of America dissolved. The vote was unanimous, and the state thus "resumed her sovereign powers." Excited throngs had gathered outside the convention hall; the streets of Charleston were filled with an expectant multitude. When the word was passed to the waiting crowds that the ordinance of secession had been passed, they broke forth into uncontrollable cheers, the cannon boomed, the bells rang, and palmetto flags were waved in exultant joy throughout the city. The South Carolinians compared themselves with the heroes of 1776; they seemed never to doubt that a new nation was then and there born, and they rejoiced at being witnesses of the mighty event. The state then issued an address to the other slave states urging them



1808 — JEFFERSON DAVIS — 1889.

1867.

From an original negative by Anderson, Richmond, Va.

to leave the Union, and to join with her in forming a southern confederacy.

Within one month after the secession of South Carolina four other states had followed her example,— Mississippi on January 9, Florida on the 10th, Alabama on the 11th, and Georgia on the 19th. In each of these secession was accomplished through a convention elected for the purpose, but in none was the seceding ordinance submitted to a vote of the people. Had this been done, the ordinance would doubtless have passed in each state, but in each, except perhaps Mississippi and Florida, a strong minority vote would have been recorded against disunion and this would have disclosed a weakness of the movement which the leaders were unwilling to reveal.⁸⁸ In Georgia, the Empire State of the South, the feeling against secession was strong. Alexander H. Stephens, who led the faction opposed to disunion, declared that the state would have refused to take the step but for the cry, "We can make better terms out of the Union than in it." This was doubtless true, and it proves that Georgia meant to leave the Union only temporarily for the purpose of making terms with the North. Even then the convention recorded 89 votes against the ordinance in a vote of 297. Louisiana was the next to follow, on January 26, and Texas seceded on the 1st of February. The faithful old governor of Texas, Sam Houston, did all in his power to prevent secession, but the legislature usurped the power and called a convention. This state was the first of the seceding states to submit the ordinance of

⁸⁸ It must be remembered that the Federal Constitution had been adopted by the various states through conventions, and not by direct vote of the people. The South, therefore, is not open to criticism for following the precedent.

secession to a vote of the people. It was carried at a popular election, but there was a considerable vote recorded against it.

These seven seceding states comprised the great cotton belt of the South. On February 4 they joined their fortunes and formed the Southern Confederacy.* A joint convention met for this purpose at Montgomery, Alabama, adopted a temporary constitution, and chose a provisional President and Vice President.

This provisional Constitution was supplanted by a permanent one, adopted by Congress on March 11, 1861. Having been ratified by the states it went into effect in February, 1862. A brief comparison between this and the Federal Constitution is interesting. The Confederate Constitution was modeled closely after that of the United States, the term "Confederate States" being used instead of United States, and "Confederacy" for Union. In the preamble we find, "We, the people of the sovereign states," instead of "We, the people of the United States." In some points in which this Constitution differs from our own, the changes may be pronounced improvements, such as: The President was to be elected for six years and was not to be eligible for reelection; he was empowered to veto items in an appropriation bill while approving the remainder of the bill; members of the Cabinet were to be entitled to a seat in either house of Congress for the discussion of matters pertaining to their respective departments. Other changes were: A protective tariff was made illegal; internal improvements were confined to aids to navigation, which were to be repaid by duties on the navigation so aided; the postal

* The Texas delegates had not yet arrived. They came soon afterward.

system was to be self-sustaining after March 1, 1863. True to the theory of state sovereignty, a state legislature by a two-thirds vote could impeach a national official acting within the state. A slaveholder was permitted to travel in any state with his slaves.

Provision was made for the admission of new states; but it is notable that no provision was made for secession from the Confederacy. The most striking feature of this Constitution was that it forbade the reopening of the foreign slave trade. The meaning of this clause has been construed in two ways: as a respectful recognition of the enlightened public opinion of the world, or as a bid for the border slave states to join the Confederacy; for if the foreign trade were not reopened, the border states might retain the market for their slaves by joining the Confederacy.

For chief magistrate the whole South turned to Jefferson Davis of Mississippi. We have met Mr. Davis in the Mexican War, in the United States Senate, and in the Cabinet of Pierce. He was a native of Kentucky, had migrated to Mississippi, had espoused the cause of the slaveholder, and had risen in public and private life until he was the recognized leader of the far-famed aristocracy of the South. He was a graduate of West Point and was thoroughly trained in military, as well as in political, life. A nominal Democrat, he was in reality just the opposite; he was an aristocrat of the old school, typically represented in the preceding generation by John Randolph. Davis was a sincere, honest man, dignified, conservative, and intensely devoted to duty as he saw it.⁷⁰ He was the chief, though not the most radical, representative of the ultra-slaveholders, and, after the death of Calhoun, the ablest leader in the South.

⁷⁰ Burgess, Vol. I, p. 17.

For Vice President, Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia was chosen. Though he was a man of strong intellect, the choice fell upon him rather because of the elements he represented. He had been a Whig, and had joined the disunionists only out of loyalty to his state. It was believed that his selection for the second office would attach to the southern cause the former Whigs and those who had reluctantly joined in the disunion movement. Mr. Davis chose a Cabinet of six members, one from each of the seceding states except his own.⁷¹ There were but two really strong men in this Cabinet,—Robert Toombs of Georgia, secretary of state, and Judah P. Benjamin of Louisiana, attorney-general.

Thus within three months after the election of Lincoln, and one month before his inauguration, seven of the Southern states had withdrawn from the Union, and had set up a government of their own,—on account of anticipated evils,—and this in the face of the repeated statements of the Republicans that they had no intention of interfering with slavery where it already existed, and in the face of the fact that they could not do so if they would, because both houses of Congress were still Democratic. As to the constitutional right to secede, the question is theoretical, and no amount of discussion would settle it in the minds of all. One point, however, may be mentioned. It is certain that the framers of the Constitution never meant that violent secession from the Union they formed should be possible. The Articles of Confederation provided that the Union formed by them should be “perpetual”; and while

⁷¹ More accurately, President Davis did not name the Cabinet, but left the selection from each state to the delegates in the convention from that state.



1805—ROBERT ANDERSON—1871.

1868.

From an original photograph by Gutekunst, Philadelphia.

the Constitution, which supplanted them, does not mention this, it does provide for "a more perfect union" than the one that it replaced. How could a "more perfect union" be less enduring than the "perpetual" Union it was intended to supplant? And besides, as President Lincoln argued, it is beyond the bounds of reason that any government would provide for its own destruction.

But there is another light in which the unbiased historian must view this matter. Assuming that slavery is right, that the North was wrong in condemning it, the South was right in its desire to separate from the Union. A separation by violence, as Mr. Lincoln said, would have been an irreparable blow to popular government, but a peaceful separation by mutual agreement, had such a thing been possible, would have been immeasurably better than for the two sections to remain together and keep up forever the distressing quarrel that had distracted the country for so many years. With all our intense pride of nationality, it is a mistake to believe that the inclusion of the vast domain of the United States under one government is absolutely essential to the advance of modern civilization. It were better far that the country be divided into two friendly rival powers than that it remain under one government in perpetual warfare with itself. But, as is now acknowledged by all, slavery was a blighting evil to the country, a blot on the civilization of the nineteenth century; and, viewed in this light, the secession of the South may be considered a blessing, for it brought about the ultimate destruction of slavery.

THE WINTER IN WASHINGTON

President Buchanan was greatly perplexed at the rash and precipitate action of the cotton states. A true unionist

and an honest man at heart, his sympathies were nevertheless at first with the South. He firmly believed that the South had reason to be exasperated at the continued anti-slavery agitation at the North. In his annual December message to Congress he openly expressed this sentiment, but advised against disunion, as the election of an antislavery President did not afford just cause for dissolving the Union, especially as it was the result of "transient and temporary causes, which may probably never again occur." He also reminded the South that, with the exception of the Missouri Compromise, now repealed, Congress had never enacted a law that was unfavorable to the interests of slavery. What an admission from such a source! The message also denied the power of the President, or even of Congress, to prevent secession. Mr. Buchanan intended, no doubt, to conciliate the South by the tone of his message, but this he failed to do. On the other hand, the slaveholders were greatly encouraged in their work of destroying the Union, for now they were assured that there would be no forcible opposition to their course during the remainder of Buchanan's term. But Buchanan was not alone responsible for this message. Aside from the powerful influence of the southern members of his Cabinet over the mind of the President, he had received from his attorney-general, Jeremiah S. Black of Pennsylvania, an official opinion on the subject of secession, and on this opinion his message was largely based.

The North received the message of the President with astonishment. The press was severe in its criticisms, and the effect was soon felt in the Cabinet. General Cass resigned his position as secretary of state because he could

not agree with the President on the subject of secession," and Mr. Black became his successor. A few days later South Carolina passed its ordinance of secession, and this, with the rising sentiment at the North, wrought a sudden change in the attitude of Black. He now took a determined stand for the Union, and it was he that influenced the President not to recognize the South Carolina commissioners who came, a short time afterward, to treat with the government. But Black was not alone. Edwin M. Stanton, who became attorney-general, and Joseph Holt, the secretary of war, were stanch defenders of the Union cause, and these three soon gained the ascendancy over the vacillating President. In January General John A. Dix of New York was called to the treasury department, and his ringing dispatch to the treasury agent at New Orleans, "If any man attempts to haul down the American flag, shoot him on the spot," had a magic effect in stimulating the North. Buchanan from this time forth was in full agreement with his reorganized Cabinet, though he still claimed that the executive had no power to coerce a seceding state. In a special message on January 8 he declared it the duty of the President to collect the public revenues and to protect the public property in all the states, and to use force in so doing if necessary. So different was the tone of this message from that of December that it was difficult to realize that they had emanated from the same pen.

No President had ever been placed in a more trying situation than was James Buchanan. He has been severely censured for his southern sympathy in the autumn of 1860. But it must be remembered that his most intimate lifelong associates were southern statesmen, that he was deeply

¹¹ Notably on reënforcing the forts in Charleston harbor.

grieved at the recent defeat of his party, and that the revolt in the South was a revolt against the success of his political enemies. Could he now suddenly break the instincts of a lifetime, come out openly against his old friends, and espouse the cause of Republicanism? And further, it is almost certain that he believed at first that secession would be a temporary thing, that the Southern states would soon become quiescent, and that the fright given to the people of the North by the southern outbreak would be a good lesson for them. Again, it must be remembered that Buchanan was not a leader of men; he had little executive ability; he was cautious almost to timidity; he was not an originator of great movements, nor capable of standing out for a principle. For his attempt to force the Lecompton constitution on Kansas a few years before, Buchanan stands unforgiven at the bar of history; but for his action in this great crisis near the close of his public life, the unprejudiced American must deal gently with his memory.

The agitation in the North during this fateful winter was almost equal to that of the South. But there was little spirit of defiance; it was rather one of conciliation. Meetings were held in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, which expressed sentiments of conciliation for southern ears. At Philadelphia George William Curtis, who had been a strong antislavery advocate, was forced to cancel a lecture engagement for fear of a riot, and the Republican mayor of that city declared in a public speech that the criticisms of slavery from the pulpit, the lecture room, and the press should cease and must be "frowned down by a just and law-abiding people." A reaction against Republicanism was visible on all sides, and thousands regretted

having voted for Lincoln," not that their sentiments on slavery had changed, but because they preferred the old régime to war or disunion. This feeling of the people was reflected in Washington, and the whole winter was spent by Congress in considering how the southern discontents might be conciliated.

A so-called Peace Congress met in Washington on the day of the meeting of the Confederate Congress at Montgomery. It was called by Virginia, and all the Southern states that had not seceded, and most of the Northern states, responded. Among the delegates to the Peace Congress we find some of the leading men of the country—William P. Fessenden of Maine, George S. Boutwell of Massachusetts, Wilmot of Pennsylvania, Chase of Ohio, Reverdy Johnson of Maryland, and the venerable ex-President Tyler of Virginia, who was chosen chairman of the Congress. After three weeks' deliberation this "Congress" sent its recommendations to Congress; but they came to nothing, and it is needless to discuss them.

The Senate had been deeply engaged in the discussion of the "Crittenden Compromise," so called from its author, John J. Crittenden of Kentucky. This aged senator, who had devoted a long and useful life to the service of his country, was perhaps better fitted than any other to adjust the relations between the two sections, had such a thing been possible. He not only represented a border state that hung in the balance; he was also himself a political neutral. Formerly a Whig, he did not, at the fall of his own party, join the Republicans or the Democrats, but occupied a middle ground; and he was now fitted above all men to view both sides with the unprejudiced eye of a jurist. Crittenden

²⁰ Blaine, Vol. I, p. 273.